INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE

Screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO) - NIGHT

A small bare room, illuminated only by the streetlight coming through the window.

A hand presses a cassette into a recorder and fiddles with a small microphone.

MALLOY sits over a table fiddling with the tape. He is young, half-shaven, dressed in T-shirt and jeans. He looks to --

LOUIS, who stands by the window, looking out on the street, with his back to Malloy. Louis is dressed in an old-fashioned suit.

LOUIS
So you want me to tell you the story of my life...

MALLOY
That's what I do. I interview people. I collect lives. F.M. radio, F.F.R.C. I just interviewed a genuine hero, a cop who --

LOUIS
(quietly interrupting)
You'd have to have a lot of tape for my story. I've had a very unusual life.

MALLOY
So much the better. I've got a pocket full of tapes.

LOUIS
You followed me here, didn't you?

MALLOY
Saw you in the street outside. You seemed interesting. Is this where you live?

LOUIS
It's just a room...

(CONTINUED)

MALLOY
So shall we begin?
(playfully, almost teasing)
What do you do?

LOUIS
I'm a vampire.

Malloy laughs.

MALLOY
See? I knew you were interesting. You mean this literally, I take it?

LOUIS
Absolutely. I was watching you watching me. I was waiting for you in that alleyway. And then you began to speak.

MALLOY
Well, what a lucky break for me.

LOUIS
Perhaps lucky for both of us.

Still in shadow, he turns from the window and approaches the table.

LOUIS
I'll tell you my story. All of it. I'd like to do that very much.

Malloy is uneasy as he studies the shadowy figure, fascinated but afraid.

MALLOY
You were going to kill me? Drink my blood?

LOUIS
Yes, but you needn't worry about that now. Things change.

Louis stands opposite, hand on the chair. Malloy is riveted.

MALLOY
You believe this, don't you? That you're a vampire? You really think...

LOUIS
We can't begin this way. Let me turn on the light.

MALLOY
But I thought vampires didn't like the light.

LOUIS
We love it. I only wanted to prepare you.

Louis pulls the cord of the overhead naked light bulb.

LOUIS' FACE

appears inhumanly white, eyes glittering. Inhuman or not alive. The effect is subtle, beautiful and ghastly.

MALLOY
Good God!

He struggles to suppress fear and understand.

LOUIS
Don't be frightened. I want this opportunity.

The light appears to go out by itself and suddenly Louis is in the chair, dimly lit by the street-light from the window. The cassette is turning.

MALLOY
How did you do that?

LOUIS
The same way you do it. A series of simple gestures. Only I moved too fast for you to see. I'm flesh and blood, you see. But not human. I haven't been human for two hundred years.

Malloy is speechless, frightened yet enthralled.

LOUIS
What can I do to put you at ease? Shall we begin like David Copperfield? I am born, I grow up. Or shall we begin when I was born to darkness, as I call it. That's really where we should start, don't you think?

CONTINUED:

MALLOY
You're not lying to me, are you?

LOUIS
Why should I lie? 1791 was the year it happened. I was twenty-four -- younger than you are now.

MALLOY
Yes.

LOUIS
But times were different then. I was a man at that age. The master of a large plantation just south of New Orleans.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOUISIANA - DAY (1791)

A dishevelled Louis, hair in pigtail, in deep pocket frock coat, rides his horse through the fields of indigo, passing an overseer and slaves at work.

He passes slave quarters and the distant colonial mansion of Pointe du Lac.

He comes to a small parish church and a graveyard. He dismounts and walks through the tombs to an elaborate one in Greek style.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I had just lost my wife in childbirth. She and the infant had been buried less than half a year.

There is a marble angel above the tomb, feminine, with a tiny cherub angel in her arms. Louis looks from the angel, down to the inscriptions on the tomb:

DIANNE DE POINTE DU LAC 1763 - 1791
INFANT JEAN MARIE - 1791

Louis rips away the vines already covering the inscription, then drinks from a pocket flask. His face is ashen.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I was twenty-four and life seemed finished. I couldn't bear the pain of their loss. I longed for a release from it.

INT. WATERFRONT TAVERN - NIGHT

Louis in ragged lace and dirty brocade sitting between two whores at a gaming table, drinking absinthe. All around him flatboatmen, whores, gamblers, black African freedmen.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I wanted to lose everything. My wealth, my estate, my sanity. But lady luck didn't oblige.

Louis displays a hand of four aces. A GAMBLER at the table stands in fury, overturning money, cards, drinks.

LOUIS
You're calling me a cheat?

GAMBLER
I'm calling you a piece of shit.

The Gambler pulls out a pearl-handled pistol and points it at Louis. The crowd hushes and draws back. Louis smiles drunkenly and stands. He rips open his shirt, exposing his chest.

LOUIS
Then do me a favor. Get rid of this piece of shit...

The Gambler's finger's on the trigger. His hand shakes.

LOUIS
You lack the courage of your convictions, sir. Do it.

LESTAT, a hooded figure in the corner, smiles from beneath the shadow of his hood. Gleaming blue eyes.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Most of all I longed for death. I know that now. I invited it, a release from the pain of living...

The Gambler lowers his gun, scowling. Louis pockets the fistfulls of coins he has won.

EXT. WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Loud, crowded riverfront taverns full of ruffians. Louis staggers down, an arm around a whore, drinking from a bottle. A pockmarked pimp follows behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS (V.O.)
My invitation was open to anyone. Sailors, thieves, whores and slaves...

EXT. WHARF - NIGHT

Louis, quite insensible, being propped up against a wall by the whore in a dank wharf over the water. The pimp rifles his pockets, then pulls a knife, about to slice his throat, when a shadow falls over him. He turns, and we see the face of Lestat, who lifts him into the air by his throat, breaking his neck. The whore screams and Lestat's other hand clamps over her mouth. Lestat drags her towards him. Louis falls to the ground, supported no more, insensible. CLOSE ON his face, as we hear the last BREATHS of life of the WHORE, O.S.

LOUIS (V.O.)
But it was a vampire that accepted...

IN WATER

the bodies of the thief and whore float by. Above on the wharf, Louis, now awake, stares down at them. He turns, to see Lestat, towering above him.

LESTAT
They would have killed you --

LOUIS
Then my luck would have changed.

LESTAT
You want death? Is it death you want?

LOUIS
Yes...

Lestat floats down on top of him, then lifts him in the air, draws his head back by the hair and sinks his teeth in his neck.

ON LOUIS' FACE

every muscle is rigid, teeth clenched, as the blood is drained from him.

ON THEIR FEET

hovering above the ground, like two quivering dancers.

The wind -- billows through the ghostly white sails and rigging of the boats around the wharf.

LESTAT

floats higher, with Louis in his arms, draining his blood. One hand reaches out and grips a rope, hanging from a shipmast. The other holds Louis. He withdraws his teeth, and looks into Louis' drained face.

LESTAT
You still want death? Or have you tasted it enough?

Louis can barely get the words out.

LOUIS
Enough...

Lestat smiles and lets him go. Louis falls and plummets into the water below.

LOUIS' FACE

coming to the surface, in the water lapping by the wharf. The bodies of the whore and thief float beside him. He looks up and sees Lestat way above him, dangling from the rope of the shipmast.

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO) - ON MALLOY'S FACE

captivated, terrified, enthralled.

MALLOY
That's how it happened?

LOUIS
No. The Gift of Darkness requires more that that, as you'll see.

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

Louis floating by mudflats, surrounded by dead fish, the carcasses of animals, Eighteenth Century rubbish. He gets to his feet and walks weakly through the mudflats. The sun is coming up over the sea behind him.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS (V.O.)
He left me half dead that morning. He wanted something from me. He came back the following night.

INT. POINTE DU LAC - LAVISH FRENCH-FURNISHED BEDROOM

Louis is delirious in a four-poster bed, shrouded with mosquito netting. A female slave, YVETTE, bathes his face with a rag. She is crying. Other slave women hover in the shadows. Yvette puts out all candles save one by the bed, and withdraws, with the others.

Candlelight flickers on the face of the bisque Virgin.

Louis tosses and turns, dreaming, murmuring incoherently. Then he opens his eyes.

Lestat, exquisitely dressed in French clothing, stands by the bed smiling. In the light of the candle we see that he is not human; skin too white; eyes too bright. Lestat looks amiable, even mischievous, but impossible -- an angel or a monster.

Louis grabs his pistol from the table and cocks it.

LOUIS
Who the hell are you? What are you doing in my house?

LESTAT
And a beautiful house it is, too. Yours is a good life, isn't it?

Louis takes aim. Lestat puts his hand over the barrel. Louis FIRES. The bullet tears a hole in Lestat's hand. Lestat is unfazed. He takes the gun from Louis' hand and throws it away. His hand begins to heal.

LESTAT
You're not afraid of anything, are you?

LOUIS
Why should I be?

Louis reaches for his sword, hanging by the bed, and points it. Lestat laughs indulgently. He draws closer.

LESTAT
Are you going to put that through me too? Ruin my beautiful clothes?

He comes closer to Louis, right up to his face, so the sword passes through his waistcoat.

LESTAT
Were all last night's promises for nothing?

He reaches out with his now healed hand and plucks out the sword.

LOUIS
What do you want from me?

LESTAT
I've come to answer your prayers. You want to die, don't you? Life has no meaning anymore, does it?

Lestat sits down on the bed, drawing up one knee. Louis is spellbound.

LESTAT
The wine has no taste. The food sickens you. There seems no reason for any of it, does there? But what if I could give it back to you? Pluck out the pain and give you another life? And it would be for all time? And sickness and death could never touch you again?

The VAMPIRE THEME RISES with the sound of a HEARTBEAT.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

The CAMERA DRIFTS THROUGH the graveyard where Louis' wife is buried. Everything is lit with an eerie glow, as if seen through some unearthly eye.

LESTAT
Vampires, that's what we are. Creatures of darkness, only we see in that darkness more clearly than any mortal has ever seen...

Louis and Lestat drifting, dreamlike, through the overhanging vines, come to the grave of his wife and child. Above the crypt, the statue of an angel, mother and child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESTAT
Wouldn't it be sweet to bid pain goodbye? To wave away anguish and grief? To embrace the peace of the unending night?

The marble fingers of the child on the statue move. The angel raises her head and has the face of Louis' wife, Diane. She raises her hand and touches Louis' tear-stained face. The CHILD speaks.

MARBLE CHILD
Papa...

Louis reaches out to embrace them and finds himself touching cold marble. He cries out in anguish --

LOUIS
Diane!!!!

LESTAT
They are gone, Louis. Death took them. Death which you can now destroy...

LOUIS
No!!!!!

INT. LOUIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis, thrashing on the bed in a delirium. Lestat places a hand on his forehead and soothes him.

LESTAT
You have to ask me for this. You have to want it, do you hear me?

LOUIS
Give it to me!!!

LESTAT
Vampires. We thrive on blood.

LOUIS
I want it!

Lestat bends close as if to drink Louis' blood. Louis does not shrink back, but stares into his eyes. Lestat draws back, then stands up and goes to the French doors.

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
Tomorrow night. You must prove yourself. I will give you the choice I never had.

He looks outside.

LESTAT
The sun's coming up. Watch it carefully. If you come with me tomorrow, you'll never see it again.

He leaves. Louis sits dazed, staring at the empty French window. The sun rises with unnatural beauty, over the swamplands and the plantation, filling the room, striking water-pitcher, glass, mirror, and the picture of his dead wife.

LOUIS (V.O.)
My last sunrise. That morning I was not yet a vampire, and I saw my last sunrise. I remember it completely, yet I don't remember any sunrise before it. I watched the whole magnificence of the dawn for the last time, as if it were the first. And then I said goodbye to sunlight and went out to become what I became.

EXT. PLANTATION - NIGHT

Lestat and Louis walk through the slave quarters, huddled groups around fires, music, singing. The sound of WHIPPING is heard.

LESTAT
Your grief has unhinged you. You've let your estate rot.

In the woods beyond the quarters, the white overseer is whipping a black slave, with horrifying savagery.

LESTAT
You let your overseer run riot, work your slaves to the bone. We'll start with him.

LOUIS
How do you mean, start?

CONTINUED:

LESTAT
Call him.

Louis calls.

LOUIS
Carlos!!!

The overseer turns and comes towards them, with the bloodied whip.

LESTAT
Why the bloody whip, Carlos?

The overseer looks into his eyes, shivers with terror, drops the whip and runs for the trees. Lestat is on him in an instant. He sinks his teeth in his neck. Louis runs to him, tries to pull him off. But Lestat turns to Louis and smiles, with his bloodied mouth.

LESTAT
Your turn...

LOUIS
I can't --

LESTAT
Yes, you must. You must prove you can do it. He's an evildoer, my friend. I've made it easy for you. Do it and the dark Gift is yours.

Louis pulls out a knife and slashes at Lestat but as the knife swings, Lestat, with extraordinary speed, whirls the body of the overseer towards him. Louis finds he has cut the throat of the overseer. Lestat laughs.

LASTAT
Let's call that a start.

LOUIS
I can't do it.

LESTAT
You've just done it --

LOUIS
Kill me if you will, but I can't do this...

He flees, as Lestat bends to finish off the overseer.

running up the steps leading to the gallery. He is crazed with guilt. He looks up and sees --

LESTAT

sitting collected at the head of the steps.

LOUIS

Backs away as Lestat rises and descends the steps so fluidly he hardly seems to move.

LESTAT
Don't worry. He was white thrash, they come at two a penny. I dumped him in the swamp and untied the slave, licked his wounds clean.

LOUIS
You're the devil, aren't you? That's who you are.

LESTAT
(gently)
I wish I were. But if I were, what would I want with you?

LOUIS
I can't go through with it, I tell you.

LESTAT
You're perfect. You're bitter and you're strong.

LOUIS
But why do you want me?

LESTAT
Because you're as strong as I was when I was alive.

Louis takes out his flask and drinks. Drunkenly, he turns and heads for a nearby swamp.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Louis stops again in front of the crypt. Drinks from the flask, leans his forehead against the stone.

Lestat appears beside him, radiant, beautiful.

LESTAT
You really want to be with them?

LOUIS
Yes. Kill me. Kill me like you promised --

LESTAT
You asked for death. I didn't promise it --

In a quiet rage, Lestat raises his fist and shatters the marble stone, revealing a coffin below. His fist shatters that in turn, revealing the half-rotted body of a woman, holding an infant, no longer recognizable as individuals, a tangle of gruesome rotted hair, flesh, eaten away lace, insects and worms crawling over it.

Louis gasps.

LESTAT
It's not your wife and child, my friend. It's death. Just that simple. Think and choose. It happens to everyone. Except us.

Lestat stares at him, smiling, becoming a hazy dreamlike vision, then hyper-clear. Louis again is spellbound. He drops the FLASK, which SHATTERS on the stones.

Lestat appears angelic in his radiance.

LESTAT
We shall be this way always, my friend. Young as we are now. I'm lonely for a companion, lonely for your strength. But I'm not that lonely. Do you want to come or not?

Louis capitulates in one long sigh.

LOUIS
Yes...

Lestat comes closer, smiling.

LESTAT
Did I hear a yes?

LOUIS
Yes...

Lestat embraces Louis, obscuring his face. He drinks his blood.

We hear TWO HEARTBEATS, out of sync, coming together. We see Louis' face, growing paler, paler, as his blood is drained. His eyes stare upwards, losing their focus.

LOUIS' POV

The moon, through hanging vines. The marble statue of his wife and child smile at him, as if come alive. Her hair blows in the breeze, wonderful gold tresses, the child's fingers reach out...

BACK TO SCENE

Lestat lets Louis fall down beside the broken crypt. Louis looks from the rotting bodies to Lestat above him, radiant. Lestat speaks gently.

LESTAT
I've drained you to the point of death. If you drink from me you live forever. If I leave you here you die.

Lestat lifts his hand to his lips and blows Louis a kiss.

LOUIS
No. Don't leave me here. Give it to me.

Lestat lifts his own right wrist to his teeth. Fangs slash his own flesh, blood falls.

LESTAT
You're sure?

LOUIS
Sure...

Louis rises to accept the first drops with his open mouth. Lestat gathers him up, as Louis clamps his hand on Lestat's arm and drinks from the wrist.

The VAMPIRE THEME SWELLS.

Lestat watches him drink from his wrist with wry amusement. Louis finishes, staggers away from him as if drunk.

LOUIS' POV

Vampire vision.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The world is transformed, the swamp, the moon, the clouds, the cry of the night birds all come to him with unnatural clarity. He looks down with pity at the corpses of his wife and child who appear beautiful in death now rather than repulsive. He closes the lid of the coffin and replaces it in the ground, astonished at the ease of it.

He turns and stares at Lestat whom he sees now with vampire's vision. Lestat's eyes are brighter, his buttons are glimmering in the light. Everything is clearer, brighter, containing more facets of light and color.

LESTAT
Stop staring at my buttons. Didn't I tell you it was going to be fun?

Lestat leads him into the swamp. Everything astonishes Louis, as if he's never seen it before. Louis is suddenly racked by shudders of pain.

LESTAT
Your body's dying. Pay no attention. It will take twenty minutes at the most.

LOUIS
Dying?

Louis dry-retches.

LESTAT
It happens to us all.

Lestat wipes Louis' brow.

LESTAT
Come, you're going to feed now.

LOUIS
I want a woman.

Lestat laughs and his LAUGHTER ECHOES like bells in Louis' ears.

LESTAT
That doesn't matter anymore, Louis. You'll see. Come...

Small high ground. Camp of runaway slaves. Several share a bottle of rum around the fire. A male slave rises. A gorgeous hunk of flesh in the moonlight and goes into the swamp to relieve his bladder.

LESTAT
They're all beautiful now. Men, women, the old, the young... simply because they are alive.

The slave walks towards them in the darkness. A crucifix gleams round his neck.

LESTAT
Take him.

LOUIS
The crucifix --

LESTAT
Forget the crucifix. Take him.

Louis hesitates.

LESTAT
Resist no more, Louis. Feed...

The slave looks up and sees them. Two gleaming white beings standing before him with devil's eyes. Then he runs.

Louis can resist him no more. He swoops on him with a vampire's rapid movement, brings him to the ground and sinks his teeth in his neck.

Close on Louis feeding on the slave, the magnificent body shuddering in its death-throes. Lestat stands above, laughing.

The slave dies. Louis rises from him, drunkenly, engorged with blood.

LOUIS
What have I done?

LESTAT
You have fed. You were made for this...

Louis looks down at the body of the slave. Lestat's LAUGHTER ECHOES round him.

LOUIS
Dear God, what have I done?

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
You've killed, Louis. And enjoyed it.

Lestat laughs harder. Louis runs from him, screaming in anguish.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Louis reaches his wife's grave. He falls to his knees, throws back his head and bares his new fangs to the moon.

LOUIS
Dear God, what have I become????

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO) - NIGHT

Malloy stares at Louis, terrified and enthralled.

MALLOY
You said the slave had a crucifix...

LOUIS
Oh, that rumour about crosses?

MALLOY
You can't look at them...

LOUIS
Nonsense, my friend. I can look on anything I like. And I am particularly fond of looking on crucifixes.

MALLOY
The story about stakes through the heart?

LOUIS
The same. As you would say today ... Bull shit.

MALLOY
What about coffins?

LOUIS
Coffins... coffins unfortunately are a necessity...

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Louis walks up the steps to his mansion. He looks now like a fully-fledged vampire. Yvette, the slave girl, stares at him from the open doorway. Cascades of HARPSICORD MUSIC come from the interior.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Killing is no ordinary act. It is the experience of another's life for certain. That night I had lost my own life and taken another's. I was drowning in a sea of human guilt and regret, with all the heightened senses of a vampire...

Louis enters the mansion, following the HARPSICHORD MUSIC, as if in a dream. Yvette draws back as he approaches.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

Louis wanders into the parlour, where Lestat is playing the harpsichord rapidly and exuberantly. Louis goes to a full-length mirror and sees his own reflection there -- quite the perfect vampire.

LESTAT
Yes, that's you, my handsome friend. And you'll look that way till the stars fall from Heaven.

LOUIS
It can't be...

LESTAT
Give it time. You're like a man who loses a limb and still imagines he feels pain. It will pass. And we must sleep now. I can feel the sun approaching.

EXT. POINTE DU LAC - DAWN

Dawn spreading over the plantation.

INT. BASEMENT (POINT DU LAC)

A brick-walled storage room. Two coffins stand on the floor. Lestat enters with a lantern, Louis behind. Lestat is apprehensive and protective of Louis. He pulls back one lid to reveal a satin interior.

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
You must get into it. It's the only safe place for you when the light comes.

LOUIS
And if I don't?

LESTAT
The sun will destroy the blood I've given you. Every tissue, every vein. The fire in this lantern could do that, too.

Louis approaches the coffin, hands trembling as he peers into it.

LESTAT
Don't be afraid. In moments you'll be sleeping as soundly as you ever slept. And when you awake I'll be waiting for you, and so will all the world.

Louis crawls into the coffin, fearful yet fascinated.

LOUIS
You told me something earlier. You said you didn't have a choice. Was that true?

Lestat smiles bitterly and nods.

LESTAT
Someday I'll tell you. We have a lot of time to talk to each other. You might say... we have all the time we shall ever need.

He closes the lid.

Total darkness. Sounds of Louis' panicked BREATHING. Of his prayer again.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Dear God, what have I done?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Louis and Lestat sitting at a sumptuous table, piled with uneaten food. Lestat is going through sheafs of documents.

Lestat shrugs.

LESTAT
I wouldn't call it living. I'd call it surviving. A useful trick if you're caught for a month on a ship at sea.

Lestat strokes the belly of the dead rat, studying it sadly.

LESTAT
There's nothing in the world now that doesn't hold some...

LOUIS
Fascination...

LESTAT
Yes. And I'm bored with this prattle --

He throws the rat away.

LOUIS
But we can live without taking human life. It's possible.

LESTAT
Anything is possible. But just try it for a week. Come into New Orleans and let me show you some real sport!

He rises. Louis follows.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT

A big, lavish drinking place with a raised stage.

Italian actors in buffoonish costumes act crude commedia dell'arte on the stage.

Plantation owners in soiled brocade, lace, crooked wigs watch the show as tavern wenches move about.

LOUIS (V.O.)
This was New Orleans, a magical and magnificent place to live. In which a vampire, richly dressed, might attract no more notice in the evening than hundreds of other exotic creatures...

Louis and Lestat by a table, in the shadow of a tree. Teresa, a tavern wench, sits on Lestat's lap, pouring drinks for the two of them. She lifts a fresh glass to Lestat's lips as he flirts with her.

TERESA
Come on, mon cher. The best in the colony. Once you touch this you'll never go to any other tavern again.

LESTAT
You think so, cherie? But what if I'd rather taste your lips?

TERESA
My lips are even sweeter still...

She kisses him. He lets his tongue play with hers, then runs it down her neck. She swoons with pleasure. Then he sinks his teeth gently in her neck, looking playfully behind at Louis, who is appalled and fascinated.

Antics on stage.

Laughter rocks the tavern.

Lestat slips the pale and dead Teresa into a chair beside him and folds her hands on the table. No one notices. He lays gold coins on the table and touches Louis' knee.

LESTAT
Let's get out of here!

Lestat rushes out, thrilled with himself.

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

A crowded street. Louis and Lestat emerge from the tavern. Louis looks up at the moon.

LOUIS
Have you ever been caught?

LESTAT
Of course not. It's so easy you almost feel sorry for them.

They walk down the crowded night street, full of ladies in their finery, freed slaves, whores, sailors, etc.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Lestat killed two, sometimes three a night. A fresh young girl, that was his favorite for the first of the evening.

INT. FRENCH QUARTER MANSION - BALLROOM

Small ORCHESTRA PLAYS for colonial couples in fine wig and garb prancing to a FRENCH MINUET. Young women sit in chairs along the walls with their chaperones. Young men stand opposite.

LOUIS (V.O.)
But the triumphant kill of Lestat was a young man. They represented the greatest loss to Lestat because they stood on the threshold of the maximum possibility of life.

A youth of preternatural beauty, silhouetted against French windows. He is talking to an elegant widow, seated, holding two manicured poodles. Lestat stares at the youth with longing.

LESTAT
The trick is not to think about it. See that one? The widow St. Clair? She had that gorgeous young fop murder her husband. She's perfect for you. Go ahead.

LOUIS
But how do you know?

LESTAT
Read her thoughts.

LOUIS
I can't.

LESTAT
The dark gift is different for each of us. But one thing is true of everyone. We grow stronger as we go along.

He leads Louis closer to them.

LESTAT
Take my word for it. She blamed a slave for his murder. And do you know what they did to him?

He smiles at the young man, who smiles in return.

LESTAT
The evildoers are easier. And they taste better...

EXT. LAWNS - NIGHT

Lestat walks the youth towards a copse of trees. He looks back at Louis, who holds both poodles on a delicate leash, walking with the widow. The MINUET spills from the French windows.

WIDOW ST. CLAIR
Now, young man, you really amaze me! I'm old enough to be your grandmother.

She leans towards him coquettishly. Louis, crazed with hunger, sees her as beautiful in the moonlight. He allows her lips to reach his. He takes her in his arms, gently, romantically, and sinks in his teeth. She swoons.

WIDOW ST. CLAIR
Yes, that's the melody, I remember it. Oh yes...

Louis draws his lips away. She is weak in his arms, but still alive. He can't do it. The POODLES GROWL. He shoots out an arm and grabs one, then the other.

EXT. TREES - NIGHT

Lestat, bending over the body of the dead youth. A SCREAM pierces the night.

WIDOW ST. CLAIR
Murder!!! Murderer!!

EXT. LAWNS - NIGHT

The widow on the grass, her poodles dead beside her. Louis is trying to quieten her.

CONTINUED:

WIDOW ST. CLAIR
My little papillions! My butterflies!!! He killed them!!!

Lestat comes from nowhere, clamps a hand over her mouth and breaks her neck. He spits in fury at Louis.

LESTAT
You whining coward of a vampire who prowls the night killing rats and poodles. You could have finished us both!

Louis throws himself on Lestat with extraordinary force, pummelling him towards the trees.

LOUIS
What have you done to me? You've condemned me to hell --

LESTAT
I don't know any hell --

Louis hurls him against tree after tree with a strength he never knew he had.

LOUIS
You want to see me kill? Watch me kill you then --

He drags him to the ground and throttles him. Lestat looks up at him, amazed and amused at the same time.

LESTAT
What strength, my friend, what strength. I remember why I chose you now.

Lestat squirms from his grip, seemingly effortless.

LESTAT
But you can't kill me, Louis. Nor I you.

He ruffles Louis' hair, with wry affection.

LESTAT
Feed on what you want, mon cherie. Rats, chickens, doves, goats. I'll leave you to it and watch you come round. Just remember, life without me would be even more unbearable...

He smiles. A sly, pleasurable secret smile.

EXT. POINTE DU LAC - NIGHT

Their carriage draws up to the mansion as the first fingers of light spread across the sky.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Being a vampire to him meant revenge. Revenge against life itself. Every time he took a life it was revenge. And the slaves with a wisdom that was denied their masters, began to notice...

INT. SLAVE-HUT - NIGHT

In a tiny cabin, a slave family. Kids sleeping on the floor, in cribs and cots. The parents sleep on the bed, young, beautiful, naked. Beside them is Lestat, who is drinking the husband's blood, his hand playing across the breast of the WIFE as he does so. She murmurs in her sleep.

WIFE
Yes... please...

She grabs his fingers and kisses them, thinking him to be her husband. Lestat gently disengages himself and leaves.

EXT. SLAVE-HUT - NIGHT

The woman's SCREAM pierces the sky, as Lestat walks into the night.

EXT. CHICKEN-COOP - NIGHT

Every chicken is dead, bloodied necks hanging down from the cribs. Louis emerges from the entrance, blood on his lips. He hears the SCREAM.

EXT. SLAVE QUARTER - NIGHT

The sound of DRUMMING is heard, African, primal. The woman runs through the quarters, screaming grief. Others gather at doorways, restrain and console her.

EXT. DOVE-COTE - DAY

A beautiful, elaborate Eighteenth Century dove-cote. Every dove inside is dead, pierced at the neck. A black hand throws in a flaming torch and it bursts into flame.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

A doll, made in the image of Lestat, is pierced with needles.

EXT. SWAMP BY FIELDS - DAY

Bodies of slaves floating in the swamp, with the bodies of goats. Slaves at the edge throw ropes around the bodies, pull them towards the shore. The DRUMMING GROWS LOUDER.

EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NIGHT

Louis walking through. The slaves hush as he approaches, gather in doorway and whisper. He turns and looks at them, sorrowfully. He looks truly like a ghost. Their eyes turn away when they meet his. He walks on.

INT. DINING ROOM IN MANSION - NIGHT

Lestat and Louis sit at table, the untouched food between them.

LESTAT
Consider yourself lucky. In Pairs a vampire has to be clever for many reasons. Here all one needs is a pair of fangs.

LOUIS
Paris? You came from Pairs?

LESTAT
As did the one who made me.

LOUIS
Tell me about him. You must have learnt something from him! It had to happen for you as it did for me!

LESTAT
I learnt absolutely nothing. I wasn't given a choice, remember?

LOUIS
But you must know something about the meaning of it all, you must know where we come from, why we...

Lestat spits out in anger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESTAT
Why? Why should I know these things? Do you know them?

The DRUMMING GROWS outside.

LESTAT
(gripping his temples)
That noise! It's driving me mad! We've been in the country for weeks, with nothing but that noise!!!

LOUIS
They know about us. They see us dine on empty plates and drink from empty glasses.

LESTAT
Come to New Orleans then. There's an opera on tonight. A real French opera! We can dine in splendour!

LOUIS
I respect life, don't you see? For each and every human life I have respect!

LESTAT
Respect me a little then. I'm the only life you know.

Louis stares. Lestat turns childishly, petulantly.

LESTAT
You'll soon run out of chickens, Louis...

He walks out, humming a French aria. Louis stares at his plate.

EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - NIGHT

The slaves, gathered on mass around fires. Frenzied drumming, dancing. Lestat rides through, scattering the flames. The DRUMMING STOPS. The slaves look towards the house. Slowly, they begin to move towards it.

Louis, sitting in despair by the table. Yvette, the slave girl enters.

YVETTE
Michi- Louis? You don't want any supper?

Louis laughs harshly.

LOUIS
No, ma cher. I need no supper. Is all well at Pointe Du Lac tonight?

Yvette draws closer. Light reveals her beauty.

YVETTE
We worry about you, master. When do you ride about the fields? How long since you've been to the slave quarters? Everywhere there is death. Animals, men. Are you our master still at all?

Louis watches her sadly. He's getting hungry. Her throat is long and slender, her breasts are gorgeous.

LOUIS
(dazed)
Leave me alone now, Yvette.

YVETTE
I will not go unless you listen to me. Send away this new friend of yours. The slaves are frightened of him. They are frightened of you.

She comes closer, and he can hear her beating heart. She touches his hair. He takes her hand and brings it to his lips.

LOUIS
I am frightened of myself, Yvette.

He kisses her wrist. She suddenly gasps, sharply, withdraws her hand. She sees her wrist is red with blood. She sees the blood on his lips. She screams.

Louis stands.

LOUIS
Hush, Yvette --

(CONTINUED)

She screams even louder. Louis clamps his hand over her mouth. Her hand grips the tablecloth, pulls, bringing the empty glasses and crockery to the floor.

In horror, Louis realizes he has broken her neck. He brings her cut wrist to his lips, then drops it, revolted. He carries her body outside, grief-stricken.

The DRUMMING GROWS LOUDER.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Fires burning in the distance, round the slave cabins. The slaves are gathered at the foot of the mansion steps. They see Louis come out, holding the body of Yvette. He is deranged with grief.

LOUIS
This place is cursed. Damned, do you hear me? And your master is the devil.

He places the body of Yvette in a rocking chair on the veranda.

LOUIS
Get out while you can. You're free men.

They don't move. They stare at him blankly.

LOUIS
Unlike me, you are now free men...

He turns behind him, and looks at the mansion, all candelabra and chandeliers lighted, all windows open.

LOUIS
Do I have to convince you?

He rushes up the stairs, snatches up the candelabra and sets fire to the drapes. He goes from window to window, lighting drapes, lace curtains, everything.

SLAVES POV - MASTER

setting fire to the house.

BACK TO SCENE

They rush up the stairs with shouts of "stop him, he's mad." A wall of flame gushes out from the interior, blocking their way.

INT. BURNING MANSION - NIGHT

Louis, wandering from room to room of the burning mansion. He sees paintings of his wife consumed by the flames. He is weakening with the fumes, the heat. We can see this in his face, the texture of his skin.

Suddenly, a large French window cascades inwards and Lestat stands there, whip in hand. Behind him we can see the morning sky.

LESTAT
You fool, what have you done?

LOUIS
What you wouldn't do. It's almost sunrise. It will be the sun or the fire. You said they can kill me. The sun or the fire!

Louis stands there, weakened, then collapses onto the floor. Lestat darts forwards and catches him before he drops. He runs out the shattered window, carrying him on his shoulder.

EXT. LARGE GRAVEYARD - DAWN

With many crypts. Louis, unconscious, carried over Lestat's shoulder.

INT. CRYPT

Darkness. Louis lying on the floor of a large crypt. He slowly comes to.

LOUIS
Where are we?

LESTAT
Where do you think, my idiot friend? We're in a nice filthy cemetery. Does this make you happy? Is this fitting and proper enough?

Louis laughs softly.

LOUIS
We belong in hell.

LESTAT
And what if there is no hell, or they don't want us there? Ever think of that?

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO) - NIGHT

The vampire sits in silence, as if tired by his story. Malloy speaks, hesitantly.

MALLOY
You loved Yvette...

LOUIS
Can a vampire feel love?

MALLOY
You loved your wife, surely.

LOUIS
I was human then. Might as well ask can an angel feel love. Both are blessed or cursed with a certain... detachment. Though whether angels take as long to learn it as I, I will never know.

He looks directly at Malloy, shocking him with his gaze.

LOUIS
Yes, I loved Yvette. As I loved Pointe Du Lac. And as with each thing I loved, I destroyed it.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - EVENING

From the sea, at evening, shrouded in mist.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Lestat I did not love. And he survived.

INT. INN - EVENING

A lavish little supper chamber with coffered bed, fancy French furniture. Open to rooftops of colonial city. Louis sits by an open window looking out over the city. Behind, we can hear the LAUGHTER of Lestat and two female voices. Louis turns and sees --

Lestat, in the main chamber with two drugged or drunken WHORES. One runs her finger down his chest. The other seems out of it.

WHORE #1
Your skin's icy.

LESTAT
Not always...

(CONTINUED)

He presses his thumb on her neck and holds her tight, sinking his teeth in her neck. After a time she falls to the bed, dead. He turns to the other.

LESTAT
Your friend has no head for wine.

WHORE #2
She's stupid. I can warm that cold skin of yours better then she can.

LESTAT
Do you think so?

He rubs her breast.

WHORE #2
Why you're warm now.

LESTAT
Ah, but the price is pretty high. Your sweet friend -- I exhausted her.

He bites her in turn, drinks her blood. She goes into the swoon.

Louis looks on in disgust. He stands.

LOUIS
I'm leaving you. I can't stand this any longer.

Lestat pulls away from the Whore.

LESTAT
What, no flowery speeches? About what a monster I am? What a vulgar fiend?

LOUIS
I'm not interested in you. You disgust me. I'm interested in my own nature and know I can't trust you to tell the truth about me.

LESTAT
What do you imagine you are, Louis?

LOUIS
I don't pretend to know.

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
Don't you understand, Louis, that you alone of all creatres can see death with impunity... you alone under the rising moon can strike like the hand of God!

The girl moans.

LOUIS
Lestat, she's alive!!!!

LESTAT
Vampires are killers. Predators, whose all seeing eyes were meant to give them detachment

The girl moans again, opens her eyes.

LOUIS
The girl, Lestat --

LESTAT
I know. Let her alone.

He slashes her wrist with his teeth, and lets the blood drip into a glass.

LESTAT
You think you can be human. You think you can go back. But you can't. You live off the blood of rats now Louis. How human is that?

The girl moans again. Lestat drains the glass.

LESTAT
Lie still, love...

The girl begins to scream. Lestat picks her up.

LESTAT
You're tired, love, you want to sleep.

He walks to his coffin, puts her inside and sits on the lid. We hear MUFFLED SCREAMING and BANGING from inside.

LOUIS
Why do you do this, Lestat?

LESTAT
I like to do it. I enjoy it. Take your aesthete's taste to purer things. Kill them swiftly if you will, but do it! For do not doubt, you are a killer, Louis. Ah!

He stands up. The girl pushes the lid off, hysterical. She looks at Louis.

WHORE #2
It's a coffin, a coffin! Get me out!

LESTAT
Of course it's a coffin. You're dead, love.

Louis screams at Lestat.

LOUIS
Lestat -- finish this --

LESTAT
You finish her -- if you feel so much --

The girl grabs Louis and pleads.

WHORE #2
You won't let me die, will you? You'll save me?

LESTAT
But it's too late, love. Look at your wrist, your breast.

He picks her up again. He turns to Louis laughing.

LESTAT
Unless I make her one of us...

LOUIS
No!!!

LESTAT
Then you kill her!!!!!

The girl screams. Louis puts his hands to his ears. Then Lestat, in a fit of pique, puts his teeth to her neck. She dies at last.

A terrible silence descends. Lestat looks at Louis.

LOUIS
My God... to think you... are all I have to learn from...

LESTAT
In the old world, they called it the dark gift, Louis. And I gave it to you.

Louis leaves without a word.

ET. DARK NEW ORLEANS BACK STREETS

A rat scurried down a gutter, then another and another. Louis's hand grasps the rat. We see him from behind, walking down the street, gripping one, then another.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Am I damned? Am I from the devil? Is my very nature that of a devil? And all the while, as these dreaded questions caused me to neglect my thirst, my thirst grew hotter, my veins were threads of pain in my flesh, my temples throbbed.

A smaller side street, in which every house is marked with an X. The street is crawling with rats, and Louis is following them. A MAN passes with a lantern.

MAN
Don't go that way, Monsieur. It's the plague. Go back the way you came.

Louis smiles bitterly at these words, repeating them to himself.

LOUIS
The way I came...

He walks on, following the rats.

LOUIS (V.O.)
... and finally, when I could stand it no longer, I stood in an empty desolate street and heard the sound of a child crying...

A house, the door slightly open, marked with an X. The sound of a CHILD CRYING from inside. Louis walks towards it.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A little GIRL, pulling at a figure in a rocking chair.

CLAUDIA (GIRL)
Mama, please wake up. Mama, I'm frightened, please wake up.

As Louis enters, he sees the woman is dead. Her eyes are being eaten away by ants.

Louis gasps in horror. Claudia turns. She is a radiant doll or angel as she stretches out her hand to Louis.

CLAUDIA
Monsieur, please help us. Papa's waiting for us at the ship. Please wake Mama, Monsieur.

She runs to him. Instinctively, he gathers her in his arms. He looks down pitying on her beautiful face.

LOUIS (V.O.)
And if I am damned, why do I feel such pity for her gaunt face? Why do I wish to warm her tiny arms? Comfort her beating heart?

She snuggles into him, suddenly utterly secure. She tugs at his hair, brings his head down towards her. And we see Louis shiver, as his lips go to her neck.

Her breathing becomes calm as she goes into the swoon. Gradually another sound replaces it.

Lestat's LAUGHTER, growing LOUDER AND LOUDER.

Suddenly, Louis backs away, caught redhanded, the child in his arms. He sees Lestat slapping his knee and laughing in the doorway.

LESTAT
Ah, my philosopher, my martyr. 'Never take a human life.' Well you must admit it is funny. Or is it merely touching? I'm not sure.

Louis stares at the unconscious Clauda in horror, then lets her slip gently into a chair. Shamefully, he wipes his mouth, sees the tiny wounds on her throat.

Lestat snatches up the dead mother from the chair and begins to dance with her in great circles, humming and talking. Her head falls back. Black water flows from her mouth.

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
Let's make a party of it, shall we? Maybe there's some life in the old lady yet?

Louis flees into the street.

LESTAT
Come back, Louis, you are what you are. The plague would have got her within hours anway. Merciful death how you love your precious guilt.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Louis running through an assortment of streets. All the night life of New Orleans flows by him.

LOUIS (V.O.)
For years I had not savored a human. And when I had Lestat's words made sense to me. I knew peace only when I killed and when I heard her heart in that terrible rhythm I knew again what peace could be. Yet even then I could not countenance it...

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAWN

Fingers of light in the sky. Louis, pale and shivering, walks splashing through the water. He comes to a huge sewer pipe, crowded with rats. He crawls inside.

EXT. WATERFRONT - SOME EVENINGS LATER

The same sewer pipe. Now the bodies of dead rats lie all around. A pair of fine leather boots splash through the water -- Lestat's.

INT. SEWER PIPE - EVENING

Louis huddled there, so pale and shivering he seems close to death. Lestat comes through.

LESTAT
All I need to find you, Louis, is follow the corpses of rats.

CONTINUED:

He bends down to him, surprisingly gentle and puts his own coat around him.

LESTAT
Pain is terrible for you. You feel it like no other creature because you are a vampire. You don't want it to go on.

LOUIS
No...

They emerge from the sewer and walk along the waterfront.

LESTAT
Do what it is in your nature to do. And you will feel as you felt with that child in your arms.

LOUIS
Oh God, Lestat. I felt peace. I felt an end to the craving...

LESTAT
That and more.

He puts his arm around Louis, to stop his shivering.

LESTAT
Evil is a point of view. God kills, indiscriminately, and so shall we. For no creatures under God are as we are, none so like him as ourselves.

LOUIS
Is God merciless? Greedy and cruel?

LESTAT
Ah, but we have even more in common with our creator. Come, I am like a mother tonight. I want a child.

Louis is baffled. He follows.

INT. INN SUPPER ROOM

Lestat enters.

LESTAT
She's here, your wounded one.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS
What are you saying?

LESTAT
You need company, Louis. More congenial than mine...

Lestat holds up a candle and walks towards a large four poster bed. Claudia lies there, angelic, under the coverlet, two marks on her neck.

LOUIS
Lestat!

LESTAT
You remember how you wanted her, the taste of her --

LOUIS
I didn't want to kill her.

LESTAT
Don't worry, Louis, your conscience is clear. You left her alive.

Lestat shakes her gently.

LESTAT
Claudia, Claudia, listen to me. You're ill, my precious and I'm going to give you what you need to get well.

LOUIS
Lestat, what do you mean?

Louis runs at him, but Lestat brushes him aside effortlessly, so he falls to the floor. Lestat bites his wrist and presses the bleeding wound to the child's mouth... He winces in pain.

LESTAT
That's it dear. More. You must drink it to get well.

Claudia sucks on the wound, reviving, making little noises like a person waking from sleep.

Louis rises to his feet as Claudia clutches Lestat's arm, sucking the blood fiercely. Lestat moans.

LESTAT
Stop, that's enough. No more.

He pulls her loose and she growls and stares at him with big clear astonished eyes.

CLAUDIA
I want more.

LOUIS
What have you done?

Lestat puts her down on the bed and sits beside her, holding his wrist, obviously in pain.

CLAUDIA
More.

LESTAT
Yes, cherie, of course you want more. And I'll show you how to get it. You drink from mortals, my beauty, but from me? Never again.

Still suffering, Lestat pulls the bell rope.

CLOSE ON CLAUDIA

Being transformed. Becoming white yet robust, bright-eyed yet crazed. She shakes her beautiful curls and the dust falls from them. They are shining in the candlelight.

Louis cannot stop looking at her. He does not notice as --

The MAID enters.

MAID
Ah, quelle Belle enfant!

The Maid comes near the bed, kneels in front of Claudia. Lestat lays his hand on the Maid's throat and Claudia watches keenly.

LESTAT
Gently, cherie. They are so innocent. They must not be made to suffer.

Claudia lunges for the throbbing vein in the neck, locking on to the flowing blood.

The Maid is transfixed.

his anguish, his fascinated horror.

LOUIS
You are the devil! You are the instrument of Satan!

LESTAT
That's enough, cherie. Stop before the heart stops.

He lets the dead Maid onto the floor. Claudia looks at the corpse.

CLAUDIA
I want some more.

LESTAT
It's best in the beginning, lest the death takes you down with it. Yes, that's it. My child. My beloved child.

Lestat and Claudia sit on the Louis XVI settee. Claudia is a vision, a doll made out of pearl. Animated, voice crisp.

CLAUDIA
Where is Mamma?

The words ECHO in Louis's head, as he puts his hands to his ears.

LESTAT
Mamma's gone to Heaven, cherie, like that sweet lady over there. They all go to Heaven. And you did very well, cherie. Not a drop spilt. Very good! You're going to be our child now.

Lestat takes out his comb and begins to comb her hair.

LESTAT
Your mama's left you with us. She wants you to be happy.

LOUIS
(whisper)
You are the devil! You are the instrument of Satan!

LESTAT
Shhh! Do you want to frighten our little daughter?

CONTINUED:

CLAUDIA
I'm not your daughter.

LESTAT
Yes you are, my dearest. You are mine and Louis' daughter. You see Louis was going to leave us. He was going to go away. But now he's not. He's going to stay and make you happy.

Claudia runs over to him. She smiles at him.

CLAUDIA
Lou... eee...

Louis is conflicted. He cannot leave her. He touches her cheeks, her hair. Same as his. Vampire skin and hair. He draws in his breath, shocked by her beauty, then he embraces her as a father might a daughter. He looks over her shoulder to Lestat.

LOUIS
You fiend. You monster.

Lestat smiles.

LESTAT
One happy family.

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO)

Malloy is open-mouthed.

MALLOY
A child vampire!

He sees the tape has run out. He rapidly and clumsily sticks in another.

LOUIS
Shall we go on?

MALLOY
He did it to make you stay with him!

LOUIS
Perhaps. He knew me. He knew I would love her more than the waking world.

(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)
But there was more to it than that. Perhaps in the end he did it -- to show me that he could. For he lavished affection on her, there was no doubt about that. Life was very different with Madame Claudia, as you can imagine...

EXT. NEW SPANISH TOWNHOUSE (RUE ROYALE, NEW ORLEANS)

Two husky movers bring in furniture through the back courtyard past the fountain and the banana trees, up the back stairs and into --

INT. FLAT

Striped wallpaper gives way to flowers in the bedrooms. Huge four poster beds in the bedrooms, and large chests, as big as coffins standing against the wall. Everywhere there are candles and pretty Louis XVI furniture. Lestat gives instructions to the movers.

We MOVE INTO --

DIMLY LIT PARLOUR

We see Claudia draped in lace standing on a petit point chair as a DRESSMAKER measures out a garment.

Louis can be seen, in an inner room.

DRESSMAKER
Monsiuer, I need more light. I shall go blind if you do not bring me a lamp, or let me fit this child during the day. Ouch!

She has pricked her hand. A spot of blood appears on her finger. Claudia takes her hand.

CLAUDIA
Let me kiss it better...

Claudia brings the hand to her lips. The Dressmaker abruptly pulls her finger away, in pain again.

CLOSEUP - HER FINGER

two holes showing.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS (V.O.)
A little child she was, but
also a fierce killer, now capable
of the ruthless pursuit of blood
with all a child's demanding.

Lestat walks through -- sees the Dressmaker lying dead at Claudia's feet, Claudia still on the chair in the half-finished dress.

LESTAT
Claudia, Claudia, will you never
learn? Who will we get now to
finish your dress? A little
practicality, cherie...

INT. LOUIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

LOUIS (V.O.)
She would sleep in my coffin,
daily, curl her child's fingers
round my hair as she dreamt of
I know not what...

Claudia and Louis, sleeping in a coffin together, Claudia's fingers curling his hair.

INT. CLAUDIA'S BEDROOM

Claudia playing with dolls, each as perfect and beautifully dressed as she is.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Mute and beautiful, she played with
dolls, dressing them and undressing
the by the hour.

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Claudia tinkling with her child's hands on the piano, picking out a hesitant tune.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Mute and beautiful, she killed.
And to watch her kill was
chilling...

EXT. SQUARE - NIGHT

The tinkling of Claudia's PIANO is heard, OVER --

CONTINUED:

A well-dressed LADY, walking through a square lit by gaslight. The lady hears a child's sobbing and stops, turns.

OUR POV - CLAUDIA

the picture of lost innocence, sitting on a bench and crying.

BACK TO SCENE

WOMAN (LADY)
Why are you crying, child?

The WOMAN, all solicitude, goes to Claudia.

WOMAN
Are you lost, my love?

CLAUDIA
Mama...

WOMAN
Hush now, don't cry. We'll find her...

CLAUDIA
Mama...

The Woman takes Claudia in her arms. Claudia nestles her head in her shoulder, her teeth near her neck.

LOUIS (V.O.)
They found death fast in those days, before she learnt to play with them, to delay the moment till she had taken what she wanted...

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

A stern, stiff PIANO-TEACHER (male) beating time with a ruler as Claudia picks out scales on the piano. He raps her on the knuckles.

PIANO-TEACHER
The thumb girl! Mind the thrumb!

Claudia glares at him, then returns to playing, improving rapidly.

INT. DOLL SHOP - NIGHT

Piano MUSIC OVER. Mozart, now well played.

Claudia staring at a glass case, inside of which are an array of Eighteenth Century dolls. An old DOLLMAKER looks down on her.

DOLLMAKER
They are expensive, my dear. Maybe too expensive for a young girl like you...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Claudia walking along, clutching the doll.

INT. DOLL SHOP - NIGHT

The Dollmaker lying dead, two puncture marks in his throat, his dolls scattered all around him.

EXT. UNDERTAKER'S - NIGHT

Claudia and Louis looking through a window at a display of coffins. Claudia points at the smallest one.

LOUIS (V.O.)
She grew, yet stayed the same. She wanted a bed of her own, yet would climb back into mine...

INT. CLAUDIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The child's coffin on the floor. The lid lifts. Claudia emerges, yawning, wanders through the flat into --

LOUIS' BEDROOM

Where his coffin sits. She slides the lid off, and curls in beside him.

INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Claudia playing the piano, now with remarkable dexterity. The Piano-Teacher sits mute beside her. As she plays, he topples over and falls to the ground. We see the puncture marks in his neck. Lestat, hearing the noise, comes in.

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
Claudia, Claudia! Didn't I tell you, never in the house!

Claudia smiles to herself, keeps playing.

INT. CLAUDIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Canaries sing in a cage, above a child's coffin.

Claudia is writing at a secretary. She is writing in a diary with a quill pen in an adult hand. She murmurs the date as she writes.

CLAUDIA
September 21st, one hour after sunset. The sky is still violet, the way Louis loves and as always Lestat was gone when we rose.

She looks up and sees Louis in the doorway, watching her.

LOUIS
How did you learn to write, Claudia?

CLAUDIA
The way I learn everything. By watching you.

She closes the diary.

CLAUDIA
But you never let me see you kill, Louis.

LOUIS
Lestat taught you all you need to know about that.

CLAUDIA
Infant death, he calls me. Sweet daughter death. You know what he calls you? Merciful death.

LOUIS
He jests.

CLAUDIA
Why does he call you that?

LOUIS
Hush, Claudia, don't talk about such things. Show me your book.

She opens it. Inside, there is a beautiful pen and ink portrait of Louis.

LOUIS
Claudia! You did that?

CLAUDIA
Sit still. It's not finished --

She begins to fill in the sketch.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Time can pass fast for mortals when they're happy. With us it was the same.

EXT. RUE ROYALE - NIGHT (1800'S)

Street lamps are oil at this period. Houses are now tall two-story Spanish style. Streets are flagstone. Passing carriages are black.

LOUIS (V.O.)
It was a very different life. And a new century was beginning. What had once been a small godforsaken French colony was growing into a great port, giving us an endless train of magnificent strangers...

Claudia walks with Louis and Lestat on either side of her. All are dressed in newer fashions. Claudia in an empire dress, the two males in trousers and bright frock coats, hair untied. They pass through the crowded streets, past bourgeois families, all with a child, or children, dressed to the nines like Claudia.

EXT. CARNIVAL SIDESHOW - NIGHT

Claudia, Louis and Lestat, dressed in the same clothes walking through a raucous carnival with sideshows. Crowd milling around, sailors, whores, children, thieves, freed slaves, Indians. They pass a Wild West display, jugglers, fire-eaters, three-card tricksters...

LOUIS (V.O.)
All human life was here, for the taking. And we took, all three of us, in our different ways.

They come to a raised platform where a troupe of perfectly-formed midgets do a burlesque show.

Claudia stops. She stares, at these small, perfect creatures like herself, intrigued and troubled.

Louis and Lestat walk on, not noticing as --

CLAUDIA

circles the troupe. She comes to a small tent, behind it. At the entrance stands a midget YOUTH.

YOUTH
You want to come inside, lovely?

Claudia walks up to him.

YOUTH
Ever been kissed?

Claudia shakes her head. He kisses her. Claudia allows herself to be kissed, then bites his tongue. The youth struggles, as Claudia holds him and drains him. She lets him go as Louis appears behind her.

CLAUDIA
He's like me, Louis. Small and yet not small at all. Like me.

Louis hurriedly draws her away.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I watched her grow yet stay the same, her doll-like face possessed of adult eyes, eery, powerful, seductive...

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

Claudia playing the piano, now like a demonic Liszt. Louis writing.

Lestat appears in the doorway. He has a big box in his arms.

CONTINUED:

CLAUDIA
Another doll? I have ten, you realize.

FOCUS ON early 19th Century French dolls -- wood, glass, wax, bisque -- all around the bedroom, on chairs, on the bed. Some newish, some tattered and old.

LESTAT
Well, I thought you could use another.

He hands her the box. It is a fine Parisian Jumeau doll. She likes it and strokes its face.

CLAUDIA
Why always on this night?

LESTAT
What night? What do you mean?

CLAUDIA
You always give me the doll on the same night of the year.

LESTAT
I didn't realize.

CLAUDIA
Is this my birthday?

He examines the other dolls.

LESTAT
Some of these are so old and tattered. You should throw them away.

CLAUDIA
I have. Or there would be twice as many.

LESTAT
But you're the fairest by far.

CLAUDIA
You dress me like a doll. You make my hair like a doll. Why?

Lestat doesn't answer. Claudia stands up quickly, and strides out into the --

PARLOR

where Louis is reading by the window. She walks to a mirrored cabinet, takes out a scissors and begins cutting her hair.

CLAUDIA
You want me to be a doll forever?

LOUIS
Claudia -- don't --

CLAUDIA
Why not?

She continues cutting. She sees Lestat emerge from her bedroom in the mirror behind her then turns to him, an angelic little boy's face now with soft curls around her face.

CLAUDIA
Can't I change, like everybody else?

She walks past him, back into her bedroom and slams the door.

A beat. Louis looks from the mass of blonde hair on the floor to Lestat. Then a HORRID SCREAM pierces the silence. More SCREAMS, which become ROARS.

INT. CLAUDIA'S BEDROOM

She stands before the dressing table, all her long hair grown back over her shoulders. She holds it with both hands, screaming and screaming. Lestat and Louis come through the door.

CLAUDIA
Which of you did it? Which of you made me the way I am?

LESTAT
What you are? You would be something other than you are?

CLAUDIA
And if I cut my hair again?

LESTAT
It will grow back again!

(CONTINUED)

CLAUDIA
But it wasn't always so! I had a mother once! And Louis -- he had a wife! He was mortal the same as she! And so was I!

LOUIS
Claudia --

She turns on Lestat.

CLAUDIA
You made us what we are, didn't you?

LESTAT
Stop her, Louis!

CLAUDIA
Did you do it to me???

She runs at him with the scissors, scoring his face. The cut heals. She scores it again. It heals again. She stares at him in horror.

CLAUDIA
(whispering)
How did you do it?

LESTAT
And why should I tell you? It's in my power.

CLAUDIA
Why yours alone? Tell me how it was done!!!!

LESTAT
Be glad I made you what you are! You'd be dead now if I hadn't!

He storms out. Louis goes to Claudia and picks her up in his arms.

LOUIS
(tenderly)
We're immortal. You've always known that.

CLAUDIA
Tell me why... you've got to tell me...

Louis carries her outside, onto the porch. There is an old flower-seller going by.

LOUIS
You see the old woman? That will never happen to you. You'll never grow old. You will never die.

CLAUDIA
And it means something else, too, doesn't it? I shall never, ever grow up.

She clutches Louis desperately.

CLAUDIA
I hate him. But I cannot bear to lose you. You're the only companion I have, forever. You taught me everything I know. Please tell me, Louis. Tell me how it came to be that I am this ... thing...

Louis strokes her beautiful face, her hair.

LOUIS
Come... I've something to show you...

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS - NIGHT

Louis walking, holding Claudia as if he was about to lose her.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Though everything was changed, though the years had warped the contours of the streets, I found my way there, aware that I'd always known where it was and avoided it, not wanting to pass the doorway where I'd first heard Claudia cry...

Louis back in the same street, outside the same house. He stands with Claudia at the window. There is a family inside, a picture of domestic tranquility.

LOUIS
I heard you crying. You were there in a room with your mother.
(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)
You were hugging her for warmth, crying pitifully as you had been for days. Because your mother was dead...

Claudia stares at him, suddenly very cold, very alert.

LOUIS
I opened the shutters... I came into the room... I felt pity for you. Pity, but something else.

He can't go on. Claudia's eyes are remorseless.

CLAUDIA
You... fed on me?

LOUIS
And he found me with you. I ran, sickened at what I'd done. Then he cut his wrist and fed you from him. I tried to stop him, but you were a vampire then. And have been every night hereafter.

CLAUDIA
You both did it?

LOUIS
I took your life. He gave you another one.

Claudia speaks through in-drawn breath.

CLAUDIA
And here it is. And I hate you both.

She runs.

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO)

Malloy and Louis.

MALLOY
But why did you tell her?

LOUIS
How could I not? She had to know.

MALLOY
And did you lose her? Did she go?

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Where would she have gone? She was a child, a beautiful, heartbreaking merciless child. And I had made her that...

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Louis, walking the streets, shivering.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I walked all night. I walked as I walked years before when my mind swam with guilt at the thought of killing. I found myself at the cathedral.

A cathedral rising out of the mist, the doors open.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I thought of all the things I had done and couldn't undo. And I longed for one second's peace...

Louis walks towards the doors, inside.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Louis enters. The dim lights of candles. A sacristan tending the altar, an old woman praying -- otherwise empty.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I had no fear. If anything I longed for something to happen, for the stones to tremble as I entered the foyer.

Louis walking down the nave of the church. He stops by the altar.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I almost genuflected from old habit. I almost prayed.

Louis sits in a pew.

LOUIS (V.O.)
And then it struck me.

LOUIS' POV - CROSS, STATUES, TABERNACLE

LOUIS (V.O.)
What if the statues gave an image to nothing? What if I was the supernatural in this cathedral? The only immortal under this roof. And I felt nothing but loneliness. Loneliness to the point of madness.

Suddenly a hand is laid on his shoulder. Louis almost jumps. He turns and sees the face of a grey-haired PRIEST.

PRIEST
You wish to go to confession? I was about to lock up the church.

Louis stares at him, tears in his eyes.

PRIEST
You are troubled, aren't you? Can I help?

LOUIS
It's too late, too late --

PRIEST
No, it's never too late. Come...

The priest gestures to the confessional. Louis rises, slowly.

INT. CONFESSIONAL

Louis, kneeling in the darkness. The hatch slides back.

LOUIS
Bless me father for I have sinned so often and so long, I don't know how to change nor beg for forgiveness.

PRIEST
Son, God is infinite in his capacity to forgive. Tell him from you heart...

LOUIS
Murders, father, death after death. The woman who died two nights ago in Jackson Square, I killed her. And thousands of others before her.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I have walked the streets of New Orleans like the Grim Reaper. And fed on human life for my own. I am a vampire, father, and have turned the one I love most of all into one too --

PRIEST
(hissing)
What is this, some joke? You take advantage of an old man?

The hatch slams down. Louis rises, confused, and the door is flung open, the priest stands there.

PRIEST
Do you know the meaning of sacrilege?

Louis rises. Walks out.

LOUIS
Then there is no mercy.

His face comes into the light. The priest steps back, open-mouthed.

LOUIS
You talk of sacrilege. Why if God exists does He suffer me to exist?

He bares his fangs. The priest runs, screaming. Gets to the bell-rope, begins to ring the bell. Louis swoops on him.

LOUIS
Why does He suffer me to live?

Louis takes him, lifting him from the floor, till his feet stop kicking.

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

Louis enters, silently, like a corpse. He hears a voice behind him

CLAUDIA
Locked together in hatred --

He turns, sees her sitting in the darkness. She is wearing a tiny nightgown of stitched lace and pearls, wierdly adult and seductive. She comes towards him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDIA
But I can't hate you, Louis.

She sprays perfume over her body as she comes nearer.

CLAUDIA
Is this the aroma of a mortal child?

She whispers.

CLAUDIA
Louis. Lover.

She kisses his cheek.

CLAUDIA
I was mortal to you. You gave me your immortal kiss. You became my mother and my father. And so I'm yours. Forever.

She takes his face in her hands.

CLAUDIA
But now's the time to end it, Louis. Now's the time to leave him.

LOUIS
He'll never let us go.

Claudia smiles.

CLAUDIA
Oh... really?

EXT. DOCKLANDS (NEW ORLEANS) - NIGHT

A sailing ship, by the docks. Louis and Claudia talking to a shipping clerk.

LOUIS (V.O.)
So we made plans. She was convinced there were others of our kind in Europe, that they would have the answers Lestat couldn't provide. Lestat whom she now hated, who she thought she could be free of. I doubted, but then she had a surprise in store...

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

Lestat playing the piano. Louis reading. Claudia enters, wearing a cape and hat. She walks to the piano, sits at the end of the piano and stares at him as he plays.

LESTAT
What is it now? You irritate me! Your very presence irritates me!

CLAUDIA
(sweetly)
Does it?

LESTAT
Yes. And I'll tell you something else! I've met someone who will make a better vampire than both of you!

CLAUDIA
Is that supposed to frighten me?

LESTAT
You're spoilt because you're an only child. You need a brother. Or I do. I weary of you both.

CLAUDIA
I suppose we could people the world with vampires, the three of us.

LESTAT
Not you, my dear.

CLAUDIA
You're a liar. But you upset my plans.

LESTAT
What plans?

CLAUDIA
I came to make peace with you, even if you're the father of lies. I want things to be as they were.

Louis perks up, puzzled.

LESTAT
Stop pestering me then!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDIA
Oh, Lestat. I must do more than that. I've brought a present for you.

LESTAT
Then I hope it's a beautiful woman with endowments you will never possess.

Claudia stares at him for a moment.

CLAUDIA
Better than that.

She takes his hand and leads him into an inner room. Louis follows behind.

CLAUDIA
You haven't fed enough. I can tell by your color.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Two beautiful youths, lying asleep on a couch, by a table full with a half-eaten meal. Lestat sighs.

LESTAT
Oh, Claudia, you've outdone yourself. Where did you find them?

CLAUDIA
Drunk on brandy wine. A thimbleful. I thought of you when I saw them.

LESTAT
We forgive each other then?

Claudia stares at him, sitting. She nods.

Lestat bites into the neck of one of the youths, sucks greedily and horribly. Claudia watches him without expression. He finishes one, is about to take the other when he staggers. He looks at Claudia.

LESTAT
Absinthe? You gave them absinthe?

CLAUDIA
No. Laudanum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lestat stares wildy at her, tries to move towards her, then slips to the floor.

LESTAT
Laudanum!

CLAUDIA
Yes. It killed them, unfortunately. But it keeps the blood warm.

Lestat tries to rise.

LESTAT
Ah, Louis, Louis, she killed them... and let me drink...

Louis watches, appalled. He goes to move.

CLAUDIA
Don't, Louis --

LESTAT
Louis, put me in my coffin...

CLAUDIA
I'll put you in your coffin. Forever.

She pulls a knife out from under her shawl, walks rapidly to him and slashes his throat. Blood explodes from it.

LOUIS
Claudia! Don't do this thing!!!

LESTAT
Louis, Louis, I gave you the gift -- help me --

Claudia lacerates his face. Blood pours from everywhere. She plunges the knife in his chest. He falls back, fangs bared, clutching the knife. Claudia leaps on him then, bites deep into his neck as he dies. Louis screams, runs forward, pulls her away.

LOUIS
What have you done, Claudia --

He drags her off Lestat, tries to pull her out of the room. She hisses at him.

CLAUDIA
Louis! Look what's happening to him!

CONTINUED:

Louis looks. The floor is a sea of blood. Lestat has begun to shrivel, as if he'd been a bag of blood. His skin is shrivelling against his bones like parchment, his eyes are slipping back into his skull-like face. His lush, beautiful hair remains unchanged. But his clothes are virtually being emptied of the body. It is no more than bones, wrapped in paper and the pupils of the eyes suddenly roll up into the papered skull.

LOUIS
Lestat. Oh, God, forgive us.

CLAUDIA
Don't mock me, Louis. Help me.

She stares at the shrivelled skeleton in its skin wrapping. She is fascinated. She sees the vampiric blood flow all over the floor. She touches it and brings her finger to her lips.

CLAUDIA
Good night, sweet prince, may flights of devils wing you to your rest.

Louis walks forward, touches the skeleton, the blonde hair.

LOUIS
He's dead, Claudia. Dead.

CLAUDIA
The one good lesson he taught me, Louis. Never drink from the dead.

She stands up, all business suddenly.

CLAUDIA
Help me. We must get rid of him.

She drags the coverlet from the table, knocking the cockery over the dead youths, and wraps Lestat's skeleton in it. She takes a bunch of chrysanthemums and places them in his skeleton hands.

CLAUDIA
Should we burn him? Bury him? What would he have liked, Louis?

LOUIS
Don't mock, Claudia...

CLAUDIA
The swamp...

EXT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Louis whipping the horses. Claudia beside him. Lestat's skeleton in the back, with the bodies of the two dead youths.

CLAUDIA
In Europe, Louis. We shall meet our own kind. Find the one who made him. Learn what it means...

LOUIS
And suppose the one who made him knows nothing and the vampire who made him knows nothing, and it goes back, nothing proceeding from nothing, until there is nothing! And we must live with the knowledge that there is no knowledge!

The carriage pulls up by a swamp. Mist everywhere. Overhanging creepers.

LOUIS
And if we find the one who made him? Do we tell him we destroyed his own creation? The vampire Lestat?

Louis drags out the bodies of the boys. He slides them into the waters of the swamp. We see ripples in the water and the churning of alligators, as they attack the corpses. Louis takes Lestat's skeleton in his arms. He slides it into the waters. The alligators speed towards it.

CLAUDIA
He belongs with those reptiles, Louis. He deserved to die.

LOUIS
Then maybe so do we. Every night of our lives. He was my brother. My maker. He gave me this life, whatever it is.

CLAUDIA
I did it for us, Louis. So we could be free.

He stands there, saying nothing.

CLAUDIA
Louis, look at me.

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
(bitterly)
I can't. Go away from me.

Claudia is shocked to her core. She steps back. Louis stares at the rippling waters. Gradually the movement of alligators stops. Then he hears a sound he hasn't heard in years. Soft, choking. He turns, sees Claudia sitting by a cypress tree, like a little girl for the first time in years. She is weeping copiously.

LOUIS
Claudia -- you're crying --

We see her face, tears of blood running down it. She is heartbroken, lost.

CLAUDIA
You never talked to me like that -- in all these years --

LOUIS
And you never cried --

CLAUDIA
I can't bear it when you do -- I would die rather than lose you, Louis. I would die the way he died --

Louis gathers her in his arms.

LOUIS
Hush, Claudia, hush now my dear --

CLAUDIA
Tell me you don't hate me, Louis. I did it for you --

Louis walks her towards the carriage.

LOUIS
I love you, Claudia. Always. And we are free now, Claudia. No Lestat. Just the two of us, beginning the great adventure of our lives.

He lifts her into the carriage and drives off, leaving the silent waters of the swamp.

INT. FLAT - NIGHT

Sturdy mulatto workmen lifting cases and trunks out of the apartment. All the furniture is covered in white sheets. Claudia dressed in a cap and hat, is playing the piano by the light of one remaining oil lamp.

Louis comes from her room with the cage of canaries.

LOUIS
The birds. We forgot about the birds. There's nothing for it but to let them go.

He opens the cage, and the canaries fly around the room.

There is a KNOCKING on the door. Clauda falters.

CLAUDIA
What was that?

LOUIS
The workmen must have a trunk -- don't stop, cherie --

He goes downstairs. Claudia plays a moment, then stops, perturbed. She goes to the window. Then sees something out there that makes her face go white. She screams.

CLAUDIA
Louis!!!

STAIRWAY

Louis walking to the door. The KNOCKING gets louder.

PARLOUR

Claudia runs for the stairs, after Louis.

HALLWAY

Louis reaches the door. The KNOCKING gets louder. He opens the door as --

CLAUDIA

Reaches the stairs. She screams --

CLAUDIA
Don't, Louis --

But Louis has opened the door. Nothing there. He looks back at Claudia, puzzled, then at the door again when, swooping into his vision comes the nightmare image of --

LESTAT

In filthy swamp-soaked rags, robust again, but his flesh shrivelled, covered in scars, his eyes riddled, bloodshot. He roars.

LESTAT
Where is she? Where is that accursed child?

Louis throws his body against the door, slamming it on Lestat's reaching hand. The hand withdraws, as Lestat roars. Louis bolts the door.

Louis runs up the stairs, sweeps Claudia in his arms, watching appalled as the door shudders with the force of Lestat's body.

IN PARLOUR

Louis runs through with Claudia in his arms.

LOUIS
It can't be --

CLAUDIA
It is! Take the back stairwell --

Suddenly, Lestat CRASHES through the casement WINDOW, scattering blood everywhere, reefing himself on the shattered glass. He tumbles to the floor and gets unsteadily to his feet.

LESTAT
Give me her, Louis!

Louis throws Claudia behind him and hurls himself on Lestat, who fights like a ravening animal, bits of his broken body coming off in the process. Then with a terrifying effort, Lestat hurls Louis off, goes for Claudia, who grabs the poker from the fireplace, scatters burning coals over him. He falls back, then comes at her again, as the drapes catch fire. Louis grabs the lamp.

LOUIS
Stay back.... for the love of God... or I'll burn you alive...

Lestat lunges again at Claudia. Louis hurls the lamp, which explodes him in flame.

Lestat screams in agony, whirls around the room, then comes on Claudia again. She hurls another lamp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Louis throws the flaming sheets around him, wrapping him further in fire. Lestat falls to his knees, choking, hands up over his face in the smoke. The whole parlour is afire. Louis gathers up Claudia, smothering the flames of her skirt with his hands. He runs out through the burning house, carries her down the back stairs, through the carriage way and through the gathering crowds of mortals into the street.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Louis running, with Claudia in his arms. He looks back at the flames of the house. Sound of a SHIP'S HORN.

CLAUDIA
The ship is sailing without us!

LOUIS
Not yet.

Holding her tightly, Louis runs.

EXT. DECK OF SHIP - NEAR DAWN

Louis stands at the railings in the morning mist as the ship moves down the river. He sees...

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

with flame lighting up the sky.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Though the fire seemed to spread through the quarter, I stood on that deck until dawn, fearful he would come out again of the very river like some monster to destroy us both. And all the while I thought, Lestat, we deserve your vengeance. You gave me the dark gift. And I delivered you into the hands of death for the second time.

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO)

Louis and Malloy.

MALLOY
Did he die in the fire?

LOUIS
He was dead to us. We were free.
That was all that mattered.

EXT. SHIP - EVENING

The ship, shrouded in mist.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Though the ship was blessedly free
of rats, a strange plague
nonetheless struck its passengers.

A body is slipped into the sea. A priest reads last rites to a mourning family.

INT. SHIP'S HOLD

TRUNKS AND CASES, CREAKING with the ship's movement. Dead rats everywhere.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Claudia and I alone seemed immune.
We kept to ourselves, pondering the
mystery of Lestat and the greater
mystery of each other.

EXT. SHIP - NIGHT

Passing through the Strait of Gibraltar.

LOUIS (V.O.)
We reached the Mediterranean. I
wanted those waters to be blue.
They were black, nightime waters
and how I suffered then, straining
to remember the colour that a
young man's senses had taken for
granted, that my memory had let
slip away for eternity. It was
black off the coast of Italy, black
off the coast of Greece, Europe
itself was black...

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Claudia, sitting with an easel and sketch pad, sketching the bay of Naples. A beautifully realised drawing, all in shades of grey and black. Louis observes.

CONTINUED:

CLAUDIA
Louis, your quest is for darkness only. This sea is not your sea. The myths of men are not your myths. Their history isn't yours.

The sketch changes to a sketch of --

ACROPOLIS

In the moonlight.

LOUIS (V.O.)
We saw the Acropolis by moonlight, shades of grey and silver. And I longed for the brilliant white of those marbles in the hot sun of Homer...

The sketch changes to a sketch of --

TRANSYLVANIA

and the traditional shapes of the vampire landscape.

LOUIS (V.O.)
We docked at Varna and searched the rural countryside of the Carpathians, for what she liked to term 'our kind'...

MONTAGE OF SKETCHES NOW

A Transylvanian village, a graveyard, ruined castle after castle, looming into the skies...

LOUIS (V.O.)
The quest for these old world vampires filled me with bitterness. We searched village after village, ruin after ruin and I was glad when always we found nothing. For what could the damned really have to say to the damned?

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO)

Malloy and Louis.

MALLOY
You found nothing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Peasant rumours, superstitions about garlic, crosses, stakes in the heart, all that -- how do you say again? Bull shit. But one of our kind? Not a whisper.

MALLOY
No vampires in Transylania? No Count Dracula?

LOUIS
Fictions, my friend. The vulgar fictions of a demented Irishman... So we repaired to Paris...

EXT. BOULEVARD FACADE OF GRAND HOTEL AND PARIS OPERA

Crowds and gaslight everywhere.. Carriages, horses, OPERA coming from the opera house.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I think the very name of Paris brought a rush of pleasure to me that was extraordinary. I was a Creole, after all and pairs was the mother of New Orleans, a universe whole and entire unto herelf...

EXT. 18TH CENTURY PALACES ALONG SEINE - NIGHT

The high walls of the Louvre, dark figures walking in pairs through the shadowy tulieries.

EXT. STREET - SHOP WINDOW

Claudia, in furtrimmed muff and bonnet, peers through the glass at a display of dolls. Each doll in there seems to resemble her, with blonde hair and blue eyes. She peers deep into the shop and sees --

MADELEINE

a young woman bent over a workbench painting a doll's face, oblivious to being watched.

INT. OPERA STAIRCASE

Louis and Claudia hurrying hand and hand with a crowd of mortals towards the sound of an ORCHESTRA TUNING beyond.

INT. NOTRE DAME

Claudia and Louis standing in the deep shadows, looking at the branching arches. Louis is overcome with sadness, Claudia is fascinated.

INT. GALLERY

Louis and Claudia walk among a series of mythological nudes by Poussin.

INT. SALON - NIGHT

Claudia, surrounded by discarded dresses and outfits, being attended by coutouriers. All the clothes are tiny, to fit her frame, but have an adult cut and shape.

LOUIS (V.O.)
We were alive again. We were in love and so euphoric was I that I yielded to her every desire...

INT. SUMPTUOUS HOTEL SUITE

Full of late 19th Century furniture, lots of Empire style, Regency, gilt, velvet and brocade.

CLOSE ON HUGE BLACK EBONY CHEST

Against a wall, solemn among all the light and glitter.

CLAUDIA

By a large gilt mirror, in her new clothes. She is covered with jewelry, fixing earrings to her ears.

CLAUDIA
Help me, mon chere...

Louis walks over, helps her with the earrings.

CLAUDIA
How do I look?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Still my beautiful child.

Claudia laughs.

CLAUDIA
A beautiful child! Is that what you still think I am?

LOUIS
Yes...

He turns away.

CLAUDIA
Why do you turn away? Why don't you look at me?

She twirls, looking at herself in the mirror, then stops, stares at herself.

CLAUDIA
You want me to be your daughter forever, don't you?

LOUIS
Yes.

CLAUDIA
Well tell me, papa. What was it like making love?

Louis is stunned. He blushes.

CLAUDIA
You don't remember? Or you never knew.

LOUIS
It was something hurried... and seldom savoured... something acute that was quickly lost. It was the pale shadow of killing.

CLAUDIA
But how will I ever know, Louis?

She stares at him through the mirror.

CLAUDIA
I'll never find them, will I? My own kind....

EXT. BOULEVARD - EVENING

Louis and Claudia walk along a boulevard like father and daughter. All around them are bourgeois Parisian families on their evening stroll. Claudia points at the children that pass.

CLAUDIA
Have I anything in common with her, Louis?

She points to a beautiful French child walking by with her mother.

CLAUDIA
Or her, or her -- or any of them?

LOUIS
Claudia, you torture yourself.

CLAUDIA
They are ducklings, that will grow up into swans. Whereas I must be the duckling forever.

LOUIS
You are more beautiful than any of them.

EXT. DOLL SHOP - NIGHT

We see Madeleine, inside, painting a doll's face. Louis and Claudia arrive outside.

CLAUDIA
All her dolls resemble me.

POV

Claudia's face, with the dolls in the background. The resemblance is uncanny.

CLAUDIA
Are they my kind, Louis? Dolls never change either.

LOUIS
You are neither, Claudia. Now stop this --

Madeleine sees Claudia from inside. She waves.

LOUIS
You know her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAUDIA
Yes. Should I take her, Louis? Among her dolls? Make a doll of her in turn?

LOUIS
Come, Claudia...

He takes her arm. But Claudia shakes him off, and moves into the shop.

EXT. LATIN QUARTER - NIGHT

Louis walks briskly, head bowed.

LOUIS (V.O.)
For a time we had been almost human, in the sensual whirl of what Paris had to offer. But the human delights of that city only served to remind her of the ageless child she had become. I felt her pain as I walked until I became aware that I was being followed.

CLOSEUP - LOUIS' FEET

Walking. A STEP ECHOES his.

Louis stops. Turns, sees nothing. Then walks again. The ECHOING STEPS BEGIN again.

Louis again. Sees a shadow, flitting.

LOUIS
Claudia!

Nothing. He walks again, hears the SAME EFFECT. Then he stops. He stares at a gaslamp opposite.

LOUIS (V.O.)
So it was when I had given up the search for vampires that a vampire found me...

SANTIAGO, a tall vampire, materializes under the gaslight. And Louis gradually realizes that this vampire has assumed the same attitude, posture, clothes and hair-style as Louis.

Louis gives an involuntary shake of the head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Santiago mimics. Louis folds his arms. Santiago mimics.

LOUIS AND SANTIAGO
(simultaneously)
Clever.

LOUIS
You mean me harm?

SANTIAGO
(a beat later)
You mean me harm?

Louis calculates.

LOUIS
Trickster. Buffoon!

Santiago echoes the first word, but not the second. Louis has broken his composure. He turns his back on Santiago, only to come face to face with Santiago right in front of him.

Again Louis turns his back to find Santiago facing him.

Louis turns, glowers, refusing to look at him.

LOUIS
I've searched the world for an immortal and this is what I find?

Slowly he looks up. Santiago draws close, breaking the mirror trick and suddenly slams Louis back against the wall.

Louis is furious. He regains his balance, strikes out at Santiago and when Santiago vanishes, to reappear behind him, Louis slams back his elbow into his midriff. Santiago staggers, amazed and then rushes at Louis, throwing him down.

Louis rolls back to his feet, then to his amazement sees two vampires, one in front, one behind. He looks both ways, then sees one has vanished. He stares, awestruck, at this new one:

ARMAND

He looks like an angel.

ARMAND
(whisper)
You are all right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He reaches into his waistcoat, takes an engraved invitation out of his pocket and thrusts it at Louis.

Louis reads aloud, as we see:

LOUIS
Theatre des vampires. By Special Invitation. Friday, Nine P.M.

ARMAND
Bring the petit beauty with you. No one will harm you. I won't allow it. Remember my name. Armand.

Armand bows and vanishes.

Louis listens to the silence.

EXT. BOULEVARD DES CAPUCHINES - THEATRE DES VAMPIRES - NIGHT

Louis formally dressed with Claudia in rich attire on his arm. They pass people buying tickets for the theatre and go inside.

LOUIS
Remember what I've told you. They'll have different powers. They'll read your thoughts if you allow it.

They draw close to:

Huge posters, reading --

THEATRE DES VAMPIRES PRESENTS
THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH
By Edgar Allen Poe

The posters are illustrated with cliched images of vampires overcoming damsels in distress.

ANOTHER ANGLE

CLAUDIA
But this can't be real. This is nonsense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Nonsense all right. But something tells me it's going to be the strangest nonsense we've ever seen.

Warily, they show their invitations to the mortal ticket taker at the door. He glances away indifferently.

INT. THEATRE BOX - NIGHT

Claudia and Louis look at the crowd as the lights go down.

CLAUDIA
Mortals, mortals everywhere. And lots of drops to drink.

LOUIS
They are here. I know they are. Listen for something that doesn't make a sound.

STAGE

curtain rises.

An elaborate painted set of an Italianate castle. Death standing before it, the traditional image of the Grim Reaper, complete with magnificent scythe.

LOUIS
(whisper)
It's a vampire. It's the one I saw in Rue St. Jacques.

A version of the Poe story unfolds before them. All of the participants are vampires. All beautiful gleaming white, aged twenty or thirty.

LOUIS
They use no paint. And the audience thinks it is paint!

CLAUDIA
How devilishly clever.

A spotlight uncovers a MORTAL WOMAN suddenly forced out upon the stage.

CLAUDIA
She's no vampire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
No. She's frightened. She doesn't know where she is.

The audience laughs uneasily, then stops as the Mortal Woman comes into the footlights. She is too beautiful, too confused. Santiago, as Death, advances on her. She backs away, terrified, then sees the other vampires, in a phalanx, advancing from behind, in a half-circle.

MORTAL WOMAN
I don't want to die!

She looks around in panic. Santiago swoons, arms over his breast as if he is hopelessly in love.

SANTIAGO
We are death!

The Mortal Woman steps to the footlights.

MORTAL WOMAN
Someone help me. Please... What have I done?

Louis whispers to Claudia.

LOUIS
This is no performance!

CLAUDIA
And no one knows but us...

ON STAGE

SANTIAGO
We all die. Death is the one thing you share with all those here.

Santiago gestures to the audience.

AUDIENCE

Rapt faces.

ON STAGE

MORTAL WOMAN
But I'm young...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SANTIAGO
Death is no respector of age. He can come any time, any place. Need I tell you what fate has in store for you?

MORTAL WOMAN
I would take my chance. Let me go! Please...

SANTIAGO
And if you take that chance and live, what is your fate? The humpbacked toothless visage of old age?

SANTIAGO

approaches her and tears the drawstring out of her peasant blouse. It opens completely and starts to slip. She tries to catch it, but gently stops her wrists. The blouse falls, exposing her young breasts.

LOUIS AND CLAUDIA

LOUIS
This is monstrous!

CLAUDIA
(dazed with hunger)
Yes, and very beautiful.

ON STAGE

SANTIAGO
Just as this flesh is pink now, it will turn grey and wrinkle with age.

MORTAL WOMAN
Let me live, please. I don't care.

SANTIAGO
Then why should you care if you die now?

She shakes her head, confused. He catches her wrists behind her back.

AUDIENCE

is awestruck by her beauty, her suffering.

SANTIAGO

draws near her cheek.

SANTIAGO
And suppose death had a heart to love and to release you? To whom would he turn his passion? Would you pick a person from the crowd there? A person to suffer as you suffer?

AUDIENCE

A YOUNG GIRL cries out in jest.

YOUNG GIRL
Oh, yes, take me, Monsieur Vampire! I adore you!

Audience roars with laughter.

ON STAGE

SANTIAGO
(aside to the girl)
You wait your turn.

The audience laughs again.

The Mortal Woman shakes her head in panic.

SANTIAGO
Well, have you a sister, a mother, a daughter you would send in your place?

CLOSE ON CLAUDIA

Even she is repelled by the cruelty. She shakes her head.

MORTAL WOMAN

Shakes her head. She is helpless.

SANTIAGO
We alone can give death meaning. Do you know what it means to be loved by death, to become our bride?

MORTAL WOMAN

looks up on the verge of hysteria or fainting. But then her eyes mist over. She is being entranced.

MORTAL WOMAN'S POV

we realize she is looking past Santiago at the divinely beautiful Armand, who has just stepped out of the wings. Armand has entranced her. He passes Santiago. Santiago stiffens, but yields the stage.

ARMAND
No pain.

MORTAL WOMAN

MORTAL WOMAN
No pain?

ARMAND

takes her by the naked shoulders.

ARMAND
Your beauty is a gift to us.

ON STAGE

Armand gestures to the others who slowly, gracefully close in.

ARMAND
Who deserves such a gift?

He pulls the drawstrings from her skirt and it falls revealing her nakedness. But she is spellbound.

MORTAL WOMAN
No pain...

Armand embraces her, drinks, her naked body stark against her black clothes, then he passes her to the other vampires one by one.

CLOSE ON LOUIS

who battles desire and hunger with anger.

LOUIS
I've seen enough of this! I loathe it!

CLAUDIA
Be still!

ON STAGE

The naked Mortal Woman lies dead on the floor. The vampires seem to vanish one by one. As the curtain draws across, the audience loudly applauds what they presume are theatrical tricks.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The audience, milling towards the exits. They talk in vacuous terms about the beauty of the show, the symbolism of it, the daring of it as they leave.

Gradually Louis and Claudia are left alone in the empty theatre. Louis seems anxious to leave. Claudia whispers in his ear.

CLAUDIA
Patience, Louis. Patience.

He looks around the empty theatre, more eery now then when the play was on. The red curtain shifts slightly in a hidden breeze, a candle sputters and dies in a box. Then the candle flares again, and we see Armand in the box, looking down at them. He stares with a dreamy expression, saying nothing.

LOUIS
We've been searching for you for a very long time...

His voice echoes eerily. Armand gestures for them to follow him.

INT. FOOT OF STAIRWAY

Armand leading, Louis and Claudia following. It opens into a --

HUGE UNDERGROUND BALLROOM

Walls are painted with famous copies of Durer, Brueghel, Goya and Bosch depictions of Death. Fine wooden coffins line the walls. Candles burn in sconces, casting alternate shadows and pools of lights. Armand walks through, gesturing Louis and Claudia to follow him.

As they walk through, vampire men and women appear out of the shadows like wraiths, startling them, drifting around them, stroking them, touching Claudia as if she were a doll. Shrieks of preternatural laughter.

Armand gestures to the vampires to back off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All obey but ESTELLE.

ESTELLE
Such a darling.

She menaces Claudia, her breasts enormous, her fangs bared. Armand throws her a look, and she is flung against the wall.

Louis stares around. The vampires' faces drift towards him and away, always disclosing the face of Armand, who seems some distance away, but strangely close, staring at Louis with a constantly calm, hypnotic gaze. Then a young mortal boy comes from the shadows at the candelabra, which he hands to Armand.

Armand and the boy come towards them, leading them along the walls, his candelabra illuminating the ghastly murals, his face gleaming like an angel above the candle flame.

LOUIS
Monstrous.

ARMAND
(lips not moving, yet echoing Claudia's earlier words)
Yes, and very beautiful.

LOUIS
Your lips, they didn't move.

ARMAND
They did, but too fast for you to see them. No magic, just grace and speed.

The boy is watching Louis. Armand's hand beckons and the boy draws up to Louis in the candlelight. He places his arms on Louis' shoulders. Louis glances at Armand, who smiles. Louis sees the puncture marks on the boy's neck.

ARMAND
He wants you...

Louis is utterly confused. Can't resist. Drinks his blood.

The boy's body presses against him, sensual, willing. The other vampires appear all around Louis, who suddenly senses it and draws away, ashamed.

Claudia watches warily, from a distance. Armand beckons at her and Louis and opens a door in the wall which reveals a stone staircase.

INT. MEDIEVAL ROOM

Medieval chairs, table, an old coffin, a bed in one corner, a blazing fire. A medieval painting of Satan, being banished from Heaven, above the fire. Armand places the boy on the bed, settling him so he sleeps.

ARMAND
Disappointing, isn't it? To come so far and find so little. Jaded ingenues, amusing themselves with make-believe...

LOUIS
We had feared we were the only ones...

ARMAND
But how did you come into existence?

He glances at Louis, then at Claudia, who averts his eyes.

ARMAND
You don't want the answer... Two vampires from the new world, come to guide us into the new era as all we love slowly rots and fades away.

LOUIS
Are you the leader of this group?

ARMAND
If there were a leader, I would be the one.

Claudia stares at him constantly, guarded.

LOUIS
So you have the answers...

ARMAND
Ah! You have questions?

LOUIS
What are we?

ARMAND
Nothing if not vampires...

LOUIS
Who made us what we are?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMAND
Surely you know the one who made you...

LOUIS
But the one who made him, who made the one who made him, the source of all this evil...

Louis looks at the picture. Armand watches him.

ARMAND
That is a picture, nothing more.

LOUIS
You mean we are not children of Satan?

ARMAND
No.

He smiles at Louis. A smile of infinite compassion.

ARMAND
I understand. I saw you in the theatre, your suffering, your sympathy for that girl. I saw you with the boy. You die when you kill, you feel you deserve to die and you stint on nothing. But does that make you evil? Or, since you comprehend what you call goodness, does it not make you good?

LOUIS
Then there is nothing.

ARMAND
Perhaps...

He passes his finger through the candle flame.

ARMAND
And perhaps this is the only real evil left...

LOUIS
Then God does not exist...

ARMAND
I have not spoken to him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
And no vampire here has discourse with God or the Devil?

ARMAND
None that I've ever known. I know nothing of God or the Devil, I have never seen a vision nor learnt a secret that would damn or save my soul. And as far as I know, after four hundred years I am the oldest living vampire in the world.

He stares at them, his face angelic, hypnotic, young. His eyes hold them both in a trance.

LOUIS
My God... So it's as I always feared. Nothing, leading to nothing.

ARMAND
You feel too much. So much you make me feel...

He stares from Claudia to Louis. He seems to be reading their souls.

ARMAND
The one who made you should have told you this. The one who left the old world for the new...

LOUIS
He knew nothing. He just didn't care.

ARMAND
Knew? You mean he is...

Claudia appears suddenly at Louis' shoulder, interrupting.

CLAUDIA
Come, beloved. It's time we were on our way. I'm hungry and the city waits.

She stares hard at Armand. Armand looks from her to Louis.

ARMAND
So soon to go?

He seems genuinely regretful. But Claudia pulls Louis out.

INT. DARKENED CORRIDORS AND THEATRE - NIGHT

Louis and Claudia feel their way through darkened corridors, trying to find their way out.

LOUIS (V.O.)
The place was dark as we left, a darkness that confounded even Claudia. And as we blundered through it, again came the thought: I have wronged Lestat, I have hated him for the wrong reasons...

Suddenly a light comes on. They see they are in the empty theatre. Santiago stands on the stage, under a candle.

SANTIAGO
How did you wrong him?

Louis is stunned.

LOUIS
You read my thoughts?

SANTIAGO
You said a name --

LOUIS
A name I don't want to say again.

SANTIAGO
I seemed to recognize it...

Other vampires appear behind him.

SANTIAGO
There is but one crime among us vampires here.

He looks at Claudia.

SANTIAGO
You should know, who are so secretive about the vampire who made you.

Claudia laughs.

CLAUDIA
Boredom!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SANTIAGO
It is the crime that means death to any vampire. To kill your own kind!

CLAUDIA
(laughing)
Aaaah! I was so afraid it was to be born like Venus out of the foam, as we were! Come, Louis, let's go!

EXT. HOTEL SAINT GABRIEL - NIGHT

Claudia and Louis enter the lobby.

CLAUDIA
I loathe them! I can't stand the sight of them! Stupid bourgeois Parisians, all dressed in black like some private club! I've searched for them the world over and I despise them!

She marches up the stairs.

CLAUDIA
What a fool I was to kill Lestat. I'm in danger.

LOUIS
What danger?

CLAUDIA
I can feel it from them! They want to know who made us, what became of him. They have their rules, their idiotic rules!

They come to their room, enter.

INT. HOTEL ROOMS - NIGHT

Louis closes the door behind him. Claudia paces.

LOUIS
Do you think I would let them harm you?

CLAUDIA
No, you would not, Louis. Danger holds you to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Love holds you to me. And we are in danger, not you.

CLAUDIA
Love?

She smiles at him. A strange, sad, adult smile.

CLAUDIA
You would leave me for Armand if he beckoned you.

LOUIS
Never.

CLAUDIA
He wants you as you want him. He's been waiting for you. He wants you for a companion. He bides his time in that place. He finds them as dull and lifeless as we do.

LOUIS
That's not so.

CLAUDIA
Do you know what his soul said to me without saying a word? When he put me in that trance...

LOUIS
So you felt it too!

CLAUDIA
Let him go, he said. Let him go.

She touches his face.

CLAUDIA
Is that what I should do, Louis? Let you go? My father? My lover? My Louis, who made me?

There are tears in her eyes. Louis lifts her up in his arms.

LOUIS
He can protect us, Claudia.

CLAUDIA
You really believe that?

EXT. DOLL-SHOP - NIGHT

Claudia, staring at the dolls. We see Madeleine inside, painting a doll. She sees Claudia and smiles and waves.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Louis, sitting alone in the box, as the curtains draw back, to show Santiago as death, as before. Louis takes advantage of the darkness to slip away.

INT. ARMAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

Armand opens the door to Louis' KNOCK.

ARMAND
I was waiting for you...

LOUIS
Listen to me.

He follows Armand into the room.

LOUIS
Claudia is dear to me. My... daughter.

ARMAND
Your lover.

LOUIS
No, my beloved, my child.

ARMAND
If you say so. You are innocent.

LOUIS
I'm not innocent. But I'm afraid. She feels she's in danger from the others.

ARMAND
She is.

LOUIS
But why?

ARMAND
I could give you reasons. Her silence. Her youth. It's forbidden to make so young, so helpless, that cannot survive on its own.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS
Then blame the one who made her...

ARMAND
Did you kill this vampire who made you both? Is that why you won't say his name? Santiago thinks you did.

LOUIS
We want no quarrel with him.

ARMAND
It's already begun. If you want to save her, send her away.

LOUIS
Then I leave too.

Armand smiles.

ARMAND
So soon? Without any of those answers you so longed for?

LOUIS
You said there were none.

ARMAND
But you asked the wrong questions. Do you know how few vampires have the stamina for immortality? How quickly they perish of their own will?

LOUIS
We can do that?

ARMAND
You would never give up on life. If the world were reduced to one empty cell, one fragile candle, you stay alive and study it. You see too clearly. You see too much.

LOUIS
That's what the one who made me said.

ARMAND
How he must have loved you.

Armand suddenly grips Louis close to him.

ARMAND
Louis, I need you more than he ever did. I need a link with this century. The world changes. We do not. Therein lies the irony that ultimately kills us. I need you to make contact with this age.

Louis laughs bitterly.

LOUIS
Me? Don't you see? I'm not the spirit of any age! I'm at odds with everything and always have been! I'm not even sure what I am!

Armand smiles.

ARMAND
But, Louis, that is the very spirit of your age. The heart of it. Your fall from grace has been the fall of a century.

Louis is stunned.

LOUIS
And the vampires of the Theatre?

ARMAND
Like moths around the candle of the age. Decadent, useless. They can't reflect anything. But you do. You reflect its broken heart.

Louis is speechless.

ARMAND
Are these not the answers you came for?

LOUIS
(softly)
Yes... My God...

ARMAND
A vampire with a human soul. An immortal, with a mortal's passion. You are beautiful, my friend. Lestat must have wept when he made you --

LOUIS
Lestat! You knew Lestat?

ARMAND
Yes I knew him. Knew him well enough not to mourn his passing.

Armand stands. He takes Louis by the arm, leads him towards the back wall.

ARMAND
But you must go now. You must get her safely out of Paris.

He opens a hidden door in the wall.

ARMAND
No one else knows of this door. When you knock you will find me waiting...

EXT. THEATRE DES VAMPIRES - NIGHT

Louis, in the street outside, as the door closes behind him.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I felt a kind of peace at last. I had found the teacher which Lestat could never, I knew now, have been. I knew knowledge would never be withheld by Armand. It would pass through him as through a pane of glass. And I knew Claudia must leave me...

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Louis enters. There is unfamiliar scent in the air, a doll sitting by the mirror. Louis looks in the mirror and sees --

Madeleine, the doll-maker, resplendent in green taffeta, sitting like a Madonna with Claudia on her lap. Claudia's arms are wound round her neck. The contrast between mortal woman and immortal child is plain.

CLAUDIA
Madeleine... Louis is shy.

Madeleine rises and comes towards Louis.

She draws back the lace fringes round her throat, so he can see the two marks there. She says softly, dreamily:

MADELEINE
Drink.

Louis turns away. Claudia speaks, icy, from the bed.

CLAUDIA
Do it, Louis. Because I cannot do it. I haven't the strength. You saw to that when you made me.

Louis turns to Madeleine.

LOUIS
You haven't the vaguest conception under God of what you ask!

MADELEINE
Au contraire, monsieur, I have.

Louis pushes her away. Claudia screams.

CLAUDIA
You have found your new companion, Louis! You will make me mine!

Louis grips Madeleine and shakes her.

LOUIS
How do we seem to you? Do you think us beautiful, magical, our white skin, our fierce eyes? Drink, you ask me! Have you any idea of the thing you will become?

CLAUDIA
Your evil is that you cannot be evil! And I will suffer for it no longer!

LOUIS
Don't make me, Claudia! I cannot do it!

CLAUDIA
Yet you could do it to me! Snatching me from my mother's hands like two monsters in a fairy-tale! Couldn't you have waited? Six more years and I would have had that shape!
(MORE)

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)
And now you weep! You haven't tears enough for what you've done to me!

She points to Madeleine.

CLAUDIA
You give her to me! Do this before you leave me!

She begins to weep, sobbing like a child.

CLAUDIA
Oh God! I love you still, that's the torment of it. But you know I must leave you, Louis...

LOUIS
Yes...

CLAUDIA
And who will care for me, my love, my dark angel, when you are gone?

Louis looks at Madeleine.

LOUIS
You promise to care for her then?

MADELEINE
Yes...

LOUIS
And you know what you ask for?

She wraps her arms around Claudia.

MADELEINE
Yes.

LOUIS
What do you think she is, Madeleine? A doll?

MADELEINE
A child who can't die...

Her fingers clutch a locket round her neck. Louis touches it, opens it.

A picture of a young girl, Claudia's age, wistful, beautiful.

LOUIS
(softly)
And the child who did die?

MADELEINE
My daughter...

Louis takes her chin in his hand, gently.

LOUIS
Look at the gaslight. Don't take your eyes off it. You will be drained to the point of death, but you must stay alive. Do you hear me?

MADELEINE
Yes!

Louis pulls her to him and starts to drink her blood.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - LATER

Louis on the balcony, weakened terribly. A breeze blows on the gauze curtains behind him, THROUGH which we see -- silhouettes -- of Madeleine and Claudia. Madeleine, her arms outstretched, now a vampire, a long moan of pain coming from her. Claudia comes through the curtains, alarmed.

CLAUDIA
(whisper)
Louis!

Louis speaks without turning.

LOUIS
She is dying. It happened to you too, but your child's mind can't remember.

CLAUDIA
But if she dies...

LOUIS
It's only mortal death.

He turns to look at Claudia.

LOUIS
Bear me no ill will, my love.
We are now even.

CLAUDIA
What do you mean?

LOUIS
What died tonight inside that room was not that woman. It will take her many nights to die, perhaps years. What has died in that room tonight is the last vestige in me of what was human.

She takes his hand.

CLAUDIA
Yes, father. At last. We are even.

He bends down and kisses her. He looks up, at the wafting curtains. He sees -- many vampire shadows, silhouetted, coming closer.

CLAUDIA

looks up and screams.

CURTAINS

are ripped aside. The vampires of the Theatre surge through.

ESTELLE
Time for justice, little one.

The vampires close on them as Louis struggles, Claudia's scream pierces the night air.

INT. CORRIDOR OF THEATRE DES VAMPIRES - NIGHT

In a press of vampires, Louis, Claudia and Madeleine are forced down the dark corridors. Into --

BALLROOM

Vampire chaos, as they are dragged through. Louis struggling like a demon.

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Armand! Get me Armand! He wouldn't countenance this --

SANTIAGO
You can make no demands here! Buffoon! Bastard --

Santiago strikes Louis to the ground. As he struggles to his feet, he sees the vampires part around a figure coming through. He gasps at the sight of --

LESTAT

Dressed beautifully, but horribly scarred now, from the fire as well as the earlier stabbing. Lestat is confused, ancient, teetering, reaching for Santiago's shoulder to steady himself.

LESTAT
Louis...

SANTIAGO
Is he the one?

Lestat shakes his head.

LESTAT
No, the child. The child was the one...

SANTIAGO
All are murderers!!!

LOUIS
You are alive, Lestat! It can't be murder! Tell them how you treated us...

Lestat reaches out to Louis.

LESTAT
No... You come back to me, Louis...

LOUIS
Are you mad????

ESTELLE
The sentence is death! To all of them!!!

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
Only the girl -- it was the girl --

The sound of SOMETHING BEING DRAGGED through the crowd. Horrible, ECHOING, SCRAPING --

Lestat grips Santiago.

LESTAT
You promised me -- I could take him back to New Orleans -- Louis -- there's something I must tell you -- about that night -- that night I met you --

He stares around him, confused. The SCRAPING GETS LOUDER.

LOUIS
You let her go, Lestat -- you let her free -- and I'll come back with you --

Santiago grabs Louis by the neck.

SANTIAGO
Death for the others. For you eternity in a box --

We see now what caused the scraping. A huge metal coffin being dragged through the vampires. Claudia screams.

SANTIAGO
Walled in a dungeon. Your only company will be your screams... Perhaps it will take centuries...

The vampires grab Louis. They force him towards the coffin. Lestat struggles with them.

LESTAT
He's coming home with me -- you promised --

SANTIAGO
(laughing)
We promised nothing!

Louis struggles fiercely as he is forced into the coffin. Claudia weeps.

LOUIS
They've fooled you, Lestat!
(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)
You must reach Armand! Armand has the power!

Louis, struggling in the coffin. Then the lid is forced down, huge locks closed over it.

INT. COFFIN

Louis, in the smallest imaginable space. Beating his forehead against the metal.

EXT. COFFIN

Claudia, throwing herself on the coffin, crying. She is dragged away. Vampire hands drag the coffin across the stone floor.

INT. COFFIN

Louis, forehead pouring with blood, being thrown this way and that. The coffin is lifted, upside down, Louis' head crashes off the floor.

EXT. COFFIN

Is thrust into a niche in the wall. Bricks being placed over, mortar trowelled on.

INT. COFFIN

Louis upside down. Sounds of BRICKS and MORTAR. Then a terrifying, unearthly SCREAM pierces the coffin, striking to his very soul.

LOUIS
Claudia!!!!!

He loses consciousness.

BLACKNESS.

INT. COFFIN

Louis sleeps, upside down. Sounds of BRICKS BEING BROKEN, THROWN ASIDE. Then of LOCKS BREAKING.

Louis opens his eyes. The lid opens. He sees --

above him, reaching down to take his hand.

ARMAND
Hurry. Don't make a sound.

Louis gets out, into a vast long catacomb. Louis runs to the end of it, steps through a broken brick wall.

LOUIS
Where is she? Where's Claudia?

ARMAND
Follow me -- that way -- through my cell --

He points to his cell at the end of the passage, the foot of the steps. Sound of RAIN beyond the door.

LOUIS
Not without Claudia. Where is she?

ARMAND
I can't save her.

LOUIS
You can't believe I'd leave without her. Armand! You must save her! You have no choice!

ARMAND
Louis, I can't save her. I will only risk losing you --

Louis runs up the stone stairs. It leads to the ballroom. He enters.

Estelle stands far off, looking at him coolly. She lifts the stage skull mask and laughs softly behind it. A male vampire slumps in a chair staring softly at Louis.

Silence. Indifference.

Louis sees Lestat sitting in a far corner. He rushes up to Lestat, who looks up at him, confused. He's holding something crumpled, made of cloth.

LESTAT
You'll come home with me, Louis? For a little while... until I am myself again?

LOUIS
Claudia!!!

CONTINUED:

Louis turns round and round in rage. Passive, still faces. A DOOR BANGS OPEN and SHUT.

Louis looks again at Lestat. He snatches the cloth from Lestat's hand. We see it is a small bloodstained dress. Claudia's dress.

The DOOR BANGS again. Estelle laughs. Rain gusts into the ballroom.

Louis goes to the door, holding the dress. Armand approaches, trying to pull him away, but Louis shrugs him off. He draws nearer and nearer and stares at --

INT. BRICK AIRWELL

On the stones lie Claudia and Madeleine, burnt to ashes, in each other's arms, like the corpse of his wife and daughter in the New Orleans graveyard, embracing each other.

Only Claudia' blonde hair and Madeleine's red hair remain unburnt.

Louis looks up at the walls of this airwell, many stories to the sky. He cries out in agony.

Santiago appears behind him, staring. Louis roars in horror and attacks Santiago, scattering the ashes into the rainy wind. Claudia's golden locks fly up into the wind, they whirl around the warring figures.

Armand appears, drags Louis free, pulls him screaming from the airwelll, into the ballroom, toward the exit.

Claudia's hair is sucked up by the wind through the airwell, towards the night sky.

EXT. NOTRE DAME DOOR - NIGHT

Louis is slumped against the stone wall. Armand stands beside him like a guardian angel.

ARMAND
I couldn't prevent it.

LOUIS
I don't believe you. I do not have to read your soul to know that you lie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMAND
Louis, they cannot be brought back. There are some things that are impossible, even for me.

LOUIS
You let them do it.

Louis climbs to his feet.

LOUIS
You held sway over them. They feared you. You wanted it to happen.

ARMAND
Louis, I swear I did not.

LOUIS
I understand you only too well. You let them do it, as I let Lestat turn a child into a demon. As I let her rip Lestat's heart to pieces! Well I am no longer that passive fool that has spun evil from evil till the web traps the one who made it. Your melancholy spirit of this century! I know what I must do. And I warn you -- you saved me tonight, so I return the favor -- do not go near your cell in the Theatre Des Vampires again.

EXT. THEATRES DES VAMPIRES - DAWN

Wet and deserted, the streets around the theatre are quiet.

CLOSEUP - CLOCK

CHIMING five A.M.

CLOSE ON LOUIS

looking at the paling sky. He is in an alleyway, outside of Armand's cell. He has a huge keg with him. He finds the door unlocked. He enters.

INT. CELL

empty. The hearth is cold. The old coffin is gone. Louis silently closes the door to the passage and blocks it with an immense bar. He goes in the other door.

INT. THEATRE

Louis hurls kerosene all over the stage, the curtain, the sets, the seats below. He grabs the scythe from the playlet. He walks out, dribbling a trail of kerosene behind him.

INT. STAIRS

Louis walking rapidly down, leaving the trail of kerosene. He creeps quietly into the --

BALLROOM

leaking kerosene from the cask. He splashes over the coffins that gleam in the dimness.

Then he strikes a match and heaves it into the kerosene. Everything bursts into flame. The trail of kerosene roars into the fire through the ballroom, over the coffins and up the stairs. We hear EXPLOSIONS of FIRE from above.

LOUIS

shudders all over, fighting the morning weakness. He readies the scythe, like the Grim Reaper.

Estelle rises from her burning coffin, screams and tries to run through the fire but Louis slashes her down with the scythe and she goes down screaming, her dress in flames.

ESTELLE
Stop him. It's morning. The sunlight. Stop him.

Others rises, choking in the smoke. SCREAMS from everywhere. They are burning.

Louis backs up the stairs to the --

DUNGEON

He can see there a thin pale light under Armand's bolted door. Suddenly --

comes at him from behind. Louis turns. Santiago rushes him in a blur. Louis swings the scythe, too fast to see what he himself is doing. Santiago's head streaming blood flies through the air.

The body drops, flapping its arms.

SCREAMS come from everywhere.

Another vampire rushes towards Louis. He decapitates him in turn. Then he staggers into Armand's cell, and bars the door that connects it to the ballroom behind him. He staggers to the outer door. There is a thin strip of daylight, beneath the door, blinding him. He throws it open, and staggers into the daylight.

EXT. THEATRE DES VAMPIRES - DAWN

Louis staggers out of the burning theatre, into the thin daylight. Great gusts of smoke cover the street. He staggers through the daylight, weakening, about to fall, when through the clouds of smoke comes --

MAGNIFICENT HEARSE

as in a dream, driven by Armand's human boy. The door of the hearse opens. Through the curtains enclosing the interior, we see Armand. He reaches a hand out to Louis and pulls him inside.

The hearse vanishes through the smoke, leaving the spectacle of the burning theatre.

EXT. THEATRE DES VAMPIRES - TWILIGHT

The gutted theatre and ballroom, the roof collapsed, exposed to the evening sky. The life of Paris around it, oblivious.

INT. LOUVRE - NIGHTS LATER

It is already a museum by this time and Louis and Armand, fancily dressed and composed, walk through it. They stop by a Gericault -- The Wreck of The Medusa.

LOUIS
You didn't even warn them, did you?

ARMAND
No.

LOUIS
And yet you knew what I would do.

ARMAND
I knew. I rescued you, didn't I? From the terrible dawn.

LOUIS
You were their leader. They trusted you.

ARMAND
You made me see their failings, Louis. You made me look at them with your eyes.

He looks at Louis affectionately.

ARMAND
Your melancholy eyes...

LOUIS
What a pair we are. We deserve each other, don't we?

ARMAND
We are a pair, and that's what counts.

Armand and Louis walk slowly through the Louvre together. CAMERA FOLLOWS them for a while, then COMES TO a REST ON a sunrise by Turner.

LOUIS (V.O.)
We left Paris shortly after. For years we wanderd. Greece, Egypt, all the ancient lands. Then, out of curiosity, perhaps boredom, who knows what, I took him home, to my America...

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

A deco cinema of the twenties. Louis and Armand, dressed in the style of the period walk down the aisle through the crowded seats.

LOUIS (V.O.)
And there, a technological wonder allowed me to see sunrise, for the first time in two hundred years...

On the screen, Murnau's Sunrise, in black and white.

We see a MONTAGE of SUNRISES, from a whole range of movies, in black and white.

LOUIS (V.O.)
And what sunrises! Seen as the human eye could never see them. We would sit in the dark, night after night among nameless humans, entranced with the miracle of light. Silver at first, then as the years progressed in tones of purple, red and my long-lost blue...

The sunrises continue, in color now, and the backgrounds in them change to the fifties.

LOUIS (V.O.)
And in time parted. We had become so alike, we both wanted the certainties of loneliness once more.

The lights come up in a different theatre. Louis sitting there, alone, in a half-empty theatre, dressed in the clothes of the fifties. He rises, exits with the others.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREET - NIGHT

Cars rushing by, Twentieth-Century madness. Louis emerges from the theatre, walks through the streets.

LOUIS (V.O.)
I had returned to New Orleans. As soon as I smelt the air, I knew I was home. There was a sadness there, rich, almost sweet, like the fragrance of jasmine. I walked the streets, savouring it like a long-lost perfume...

EXT. GARDEN DISTRICT - NIGHT

Louis walks past the many Greek Revival mansions.

LOUIS (V.O.)
And then on Prytania Street, only blocks from the Lafayette Cemetery I caught the scent of death and it wasn't coming from the graves...

CAMERA PANS OVER white-walled Lafayette Cemetery and its surrounding mansions.

LOUIS (V.O.)
The scent grew stronger as I walked. Old death. A scent too faint for mortals to detect.

Louis sees rats darting across the street. They rush into a great overgrown garden surrounding a ruined mansion. No lights.

Louis stops at a rusted gate. He forces it open and enters --

VERITABLE JUNGLE

of overgrown rose and oak tree and wisteria. He sees a faint glimmer of light coming from a distant glassless window of a huge Greek Revival house. He approaches, then he sees --

OLD SHRIVELLED CORPSE

of a man, long dead and dried up, snagged in the thorny rose vines.

LOUIS

looks around. Walks on. Sees another corpse, almost nothing but bones, sinking into the wet earth, the roots of an oak overgrowing it.

He looks up at the distant light.

He passes a third corpse, caught in wisteria and rose vine, only bones and clothes.

LOUIS (V.O.)
They were like the doomed princess caught in the thorny vines of Sleeping Beauty's Castle. I knew what it meant. A vampire had lured them here, but had been too weak to get rid of them.

Louis sees dead rats lying near the steps.

LOUIS (V.O.)
It spelt weakness, madness, the behavior of a dying animal that pollutes its own lair.

Louis treads carefully on the rotted steps.

CONTINUED:

He moves along the porch. More dead rats. He sees through the floor-length window into rooms lined with stacked books. Virtually walled with them. Water seeps down from the ceiling, gleaming as it streaks over the books. The floors of the splendid rooms are bare, except for a rotted French chair by a dead fireplace. A single mirror reflecting the moon.

Dead rats.

He moves along the porch to the parlour windows. The candle flickers inside. He sees --

LOUIS' POV

Lestat lying on the floor. He is gaunt to near starvation. All his scars are gone, but he is almost a skeleton and his eyes are enormous in their sockets. His clothes are rags. Blond hair beautiful, as always.

Malloy's entranced face SUPERIMPOSED OVER:

MALLOY (V.O.)
Lestat escaped the fire!

LOUIS (V.O.)
He hadn't even been there. And all those years I thought he was dead.

BACK TO LESTAT

One tiny candle stands beside him. He reads an early comic, from the turn of the century. Without turning his head, he speaks.

LESTAT
I'm so glad you're here, Louis... I've dreamed of your coming...

LOUIS
Don't try to speak... it's alright...

LESTAT
I didn't mean to let them do it... that Santiago, he tricked me...

LOUIS
That's all past, Lestat.

(CONTINUED)

LESTAT
Yes. Past... she should never have been one of us...

He turns and looks at Louis, old, fearful, broken.

LESTAT
Still beautiful, Louis. You always were the strong one.

LOUIS
Don't fear me, Lestat. I bring you no harm.

LESTAT
You've come back to me, Louis? You've come home again to me?

Louis shakes his head. A series of POLICE SIRENS go by, piercing the night sky. A HELICOPTER goes OVERHEAD. Red flashes illuminate his face. Lestat shivers, covers his ears. He's terrified. Louis touches him, calming him, until the lights pass over.

LOUIS
It's only a siren...

LESTAT
I can't bear it, Louis! The machines out there, that fly and that roar! And such lights! They make the night brighter than day!

LOUIS
And they frighten you?

LESTAT
You know I love the dark. But there's no dark anymore.

LOUIS
It's false light, Lestat. It can't harm you...

LESTAT
If you stayed with me, Louis, I could venture out... little by little... become the old Lestat...

Louis shivers. He releases him.

LOUIS
I have to go now, Lestat...

CONTINUED:

LESTAT
You remember how I was, Louis... the vampire Lestat...

LOUIS
Yes. I remember...

Lestat shivers.

LESTAT
I tried to tell you, Louis... that night in Paris... when I first came to you... no one can refuse the dark gift, Louis. Not even you.

LOUIS
I tried...

LESTAT
And the more you tried, the more I wanted you... a vampire with your beautiful, suffering human heart. And how you suffered... I need your forgiveness, Louis.

LOUIS
You have it...

Louis walks slowly away from him. Lestat turns back to his candle, his magazine.

LESTAT
You'll come back, Louis... take me out... little by little... and maybe I'll be myself again...

A BLUEBOTTLE BUZZES by him. His hand shoots out and grabs it, squeezes the blood.

LOUIS
(whispering)
Yes, Lestat...

ON LOUIS

as he walks through the decayed house. His eyes are expressionless.

(CONTINUED)

LOUIS (V.O.)
And my story ends there. But in fact, it ended a long time ago, with Claudia's ashes in that theatre. My love died with her. I never really changed after that. What became of Lestat I have no idea. I go on, night after night. I feed on those who cross my path. But all my passion went with her yellow hair. I am a spirit with preternatural flesh. Detached. Unchangeable. Empty.

INT. ROOM (SAN FRANCISCO) - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Malloy, staring at Louis.

MALLOY
No... it can't end like that.

LOUIS
But it has. There is no more to tell.

MALLOY
But you talk about passion, about longing about things I'll never know in my life! It's still inside you, in every syllable you speak! And then you tell me it ends like that? Just empty?

LOUIS
It's over, I'm telling you...

MALLOY
You need a new passion, Louis, a new reason to feel... what a story you've told, you don't understand yourself --

Louis looks at the cassettes on the table.

LOUIS
Do what you want with it. Learn what you can. Give the story to others.

Malloy rises.

MALLOY
You have another chance, Louis. Take me! Give me your gift, your power...

Louis is slowly horrified, then outraged and angry.

LOUIS
Is that what you want? You ask me for this after all I've told you?

MALLOY
If I could see what you've seen, feel what you've felt I wouldn't let it end like this! You need a link to the world out there, a connection... then it won't end like this...

He stares at Louis.

MALLOY
You need me.

Louis turns away.

LOUIS
Dear God. I've failed again, haven't I?

MALLOY
No...

LOUIS
Don't say any more. The reels are still turning. I have but one chance to show you the meaning of what I've said.

He looks at the boy. Then suddenly grabs him, lifts him off the floor, bares his terrifying fangs and brings them to his throat. Malloy screams, in involuntary terror.

LOUIS
You like it? You like being food for the immortals? You like dying? Is it beautiful? Is it intense?

Malloy, now terrified, whispers.

MALLOY
No... please...

Louis drops him.

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Thank God.

Malloy, falls on the floor, terrified. When he looks up, Louis has vanished.

MALLOY
Louis... Louis...

He looks up at the tape. It is still turning.

MALLOY
Holy shit...

He shakes his head. He gets up, and with shaking fingers gathers his tapes. He runs out of the room.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE - NIGHT

Malloy running for his CAR, a convertible. He leaps in and SCREECHES off through the night.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Malloy whips the car through the tiny streets, in sheer, unfocussed terror.

MALLOY
Jesus...

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Malloy driving with streams of traffic over the bridge. He breathes deeply, to calm himself. He takes a tape from his pocket, and with still-shaking hands, sticks it in the deck.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(on tape)
1791. That's when it happened. I was twenty-four, younger than you are now.

Suddenly a bony hand shoots out from the back seat, pulls his neck backwards --

LESTAT

sinks his teeth in his neck.

MALLOY'S HANDS

on the wheel. Shaking, shuddering, losing their grip.

MALLOY'S EYES

bulging, as the life drains out of him. Lestat sucking him like a rat.

WHEEL

swinging free of Malloy's dying hands.

CAR

veers widly into oncoming traffic.

LESTAT

drinks regardless.

TRUCK

coming TOWARD us, about to crush the car.

LESTAT'S BONY HAND

grabs the wheel, jerks it as he drinks.

CAR

misses the truck by inches.

LESTAT

throws Malloy to one side, climbs into the front seat.

TAPE

playing.

LOUIS (V.O.)
My invitation was open to anyone. Sailors, whores, thieves. But it was a vampire that accepted...

ON LESTAT

at the wheel, the corpse of Malloy in the passenger seat. He smiles. We can see the blood renewing him.

LESTAT
Dear Louis... will I ever forget?

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Lestat drives on, the car a tiny speck against the bridge, the sea, the sky beyond, with the first fingers of light spreading through it.

FADE OUT.

THE END